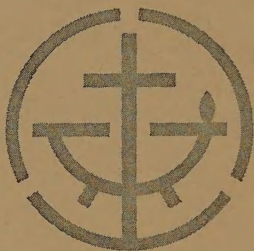


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**ADVENTURES ON  
THE BORDERLANDS OF ETHICS**

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# ADVENTURES ON THE BORDERLANDS OF ETHICS

BY  
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AND  
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## P R E F A C E

**E**THICS is beginning to be fashionable. Almost everybody now has a notion that he knows what it means. Among American people this is dangerous, for we are very prone to get and then to get over our fashionable crazes. That which yesterday everybody was talking about is tomorrow that which no one ever heard of. But whether or not the word "ethics" (which sounds very academic and formidable) becomes popular or not, I believe that any group of people, who once began to look at things from an ethical point of view, cannot easily break the habit and that this habit has come to stay, whether the word ever dies out or not.

Now there is an ethical and an unethical way of doing almost anything—of practicing any profession or carrying on any occupation, and as I am naturally very much interested in ethics, I come across its trail in all the different occupations that I see going on around me. Neither theology, medicine, business, education, nor social work is the same as ethics, but each of them becomes at certain moments strongly tinged with

## PREFACE

ethical interest. It is these moments which under a different metaphor I refer to in my title as the "borderlands" of ethics.

The purpose of this book is to report briefly what has interested me in my contacts with the professions of the minister, doctor, business man, teacher, and social worker.

All of the material here printed has already appeared in the *Survey Graphic* and I am indebted to my friend, Mr. Paul U. Kellogg, editor of that journal, for permission to reprint these articles.



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ADVENTURES ON  
THE BORDERLANDS OF ETHICS

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I: *A Plea for a Clinical Year in the Course  
of Theological Study*

I LIVE next door to the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge. I see the students going in and out or playing baseball on the green turf below my windows. I hear their morning chapel bell. Naturally, I am led to wonder about them and their problems. I've wondered whether their call to the ministry has meant in every case a call to preach, or whether to many it is not rather a call to carry the gospel of Christ to fellow men in trouble of mind, body or spirit and if so, whether their future service to individuals in their parishes is not very like what the doctor actually does (not what he is supposed to do) when he visits a patient.

For as I have known medical students and theological students, their ideals and hopes, they seem to me astonishingly alike. In each group the majority want to be of use to their kind, in man-to-man personal relations. A smaller number like to deal with crowds and to give them the healing truth (public health physicians, preaching ministers) while a few in every hun-

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dred are the born teachers and research men who become connected with medical or theological schools.

All this I talked over with the theological students one evening. I also told them how much resemblance I thought there was between a medical visit and a parish call. The doctor seldom makes a swift and final diagnosis, seldom produces a triumphant remedy and departs in a blaze of glory. He does what he can professionally; but the larger part of his call is often social; he aims to encourage, to console, to amuse and distract, occasionally to instruct or to warn.

To a family struck in a heap by the burden and terror of illness, he tries to make himself of use in all sorts of homely and humble ways.

Much of this the minister of religion, in case he thinks that preaching is not his special talent, would like also to do in his parish work. But for this, I found on inquiring of my audience, the theological schools provide no training and no practice. It has been assumed apparently that skill and ability to help people in trouble could not be learned by practice while in the seminary—that men either had it by nature and

## A PLEA FOR A CLINICAL YEAR

instinct or lacked it—but that in any case it *could not be taught*.

Against this assumption I put the experience of medical students and medical practitioners, most of whom can testify that during their medical course they learned this unlearnable art, not of course, as they would like to, not in that perfection which they could wish for, but vastly better than their own stumbling hesitating attempts when first they began. And how is it to be learned? By practice and by watching others who know it better. Medical students assisting in a hospital ward or in an Out Patient Clinic, listen to their "chiefs" as they open up a conversation, as they encourage, explain, console or rebuke their patients. They observe the steps by which a shy person, a reticent person is drawn out. They see how the ice is broken in difficult situations. They see how a visit is brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

Then they try to do likewise; they find, of course, that they cannot copy their teacher's ways and expressions, but can usefully follow his methods. They feel out their own way of getting to know people, their own kind of tact,

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their own ways of bringing home an idea which they wish to impress.

### II

Sometime after I had talked these matters over with a group of theological students, the dean of the school was kind enough to ask me to meet a class of senior students once a week and try to explain more in detail what I meant. This was, I think, an extraordinarily liberal offer, as I am not an Episcopalian and have had no theological training. But I accepted it because I believe—as I have explained above—that medical visits and clerical visits are a good deal alike, so that my experience as a physician can be of some use to those about to enter the ministry.

I got Dr. Alfred Worcester of Waltham, Massachusetts, to help me. He is the best practitioner of medicine that I have ever known, because he is a Christian, has always worked in a small city where he knew everybody, has never specialized and has always cared for the minds and souls of his patients, as well as for their bodies. We met a group of about a dozen stu-

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dents once a week for two hours and encouraged them to talk with us and not merely to listen. We talked over with them such topics as:

Visiting the sick.

Attendance upon the dying.

Consolation of the bereaved.

Advice as to marriage and parenthood.

The opportunities and privileges of visiting aged people.

Sex problems.

Praise and blame.

Misfortunes and the ways of meeting them.

Delinquency in children and adults. Our task in personal relations with the delinquent and his family.

The problem of alcoholism; drug habits.

The problem of the neurasthenic.

Insanity and feeble-mindedness.

The art of conversation and the avoidance of gossip.

The differences of men and women.

Race traits and race psychology.

Some of these subjects—especially the subject of insanity—occupied us for a good many weeks, because, in my experience, clergymen are almost certain to have intimate dealings with the insane and with their families and need both to become familiar with its usual manifestations, and to avoid trying to diagnose it.

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### III

In all this, Dr. Worcester and I were not trying to draw theological students away from theology and into medical or social work. We believe that the gospel of Christ and the spirit by which Christ lived is what is most needed in every one of the problems which we talked over with the students. We believe that the spirit of Christianity and the power of Christianity—(and not of a vague theism or a stoical ethics)—is the solution for the social problems which every minister's parish contains. We are quite prepared to say that the Christian minister shall preach nothing but "Jesus Christ and Him crucified"—no sociology, no psychoanalysis, no secular economics or hygiene. The "socialization of the gospel" has often meant the abandonment of the gospel in a mush of modern materialism and sentimentalism. The minister's job as we see it (I am speaking still of Dr. Alfred Worcester and myself) is not the same as the doctor's or the social worker's or the psychologist's. When we urge a theological student to get "clinical experience" outside his lecture rooms and his chapel, to visit the sick, the insane, the



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prisons and the almshouses, it is not because we want him to get away from his theology but because we want him to practice his theology where it is most needed, i.e., in personal contact with individuals in trouble.

Our lectures and discussions were little more than a whet and a challenge. We wanted to show the intense religious interests of these personal problems and the crying need of practice in meeting them. In short we wanted to urge upon them the need of *a clinical year as a part of theological study*.

Not a medical year or a sociological year, but a year of practice in applying their religious beliefs in the attempt to encourage, to console, to steady human souls and to *learn from them* as well as from failures in attempting to help them. In his parish the young minister may fear to intrude upon the problems of his parishioners. But no one need fear to intrude in an almshouse if he goes there with the sincere desire to bring a little companionship and cheerfulness into lives that are often very lonely and depressed. Visitors to the old people in the almshouses, to the sick in hospitals, to the insane in asylums, are sorely needed.

## ON THE BORDERLANDS OF ETHICS

I will not say that theological students can do no harm in these places. But I am confident that they can do as much good and as little harm as medical students now do in such institutions, and that, like medical students, they can learn there *some* of the essentials of their profession.

Like medical students they should be supervised both by those responsible for their instruction (their own theological professors) and by those in charge of the institution itself and responsible for the care of its inmates. Both these checks are now exercised upon the freedom of medical students in hospitals, asylums and almshouses. They are necessary. But they are sufficient. Under their protection medical students are able not only to learn the central lessons of their profession but to be of great use to the patients, indeed, to make themselves invaluable—a necessary part of the institution's management.

The same would be true—and in some ways still truer—of theological students. While learning how to scrape acquaintance of all sorts and races of men, women and children, while practising their powers of amusing, cheering, in-

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teresting, encouraging, consoling, instructing a patient and of passing on to him the spiritual dynamic by which Christians live, the theological student would learn to be of peculiar value to the patients and to the institution; because having learned to appreciate the value of medical and surgical aid, he would also learn its signal limitations. He would see what doctors and nurses are peculiarly blind to and so would bring in a fresh kind of helpfulness, supplementing but not opposing the medical régime.

No one who has not lived long in hospitals can know how much this extra-medical vision and service is needed there. Not cruelty or callousness but an amazing blindness is the curse of these institutions. With rare and blessed exceptions, nurses, doctors and hospital superintendents all succumb to it. Even social workers cannot always keep clear of it.

I have said that if this "clinical year" for theological students is established (as I am convinced it ought to be) as a regular part of theological training, the students should be supervised by their own theological teachers (as well as by the hospital authorities) in the institution.

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They should have (as medical students have) a chance to watch their teachers doing the thing which they (the students) need to learn: talking with patients, tackling difficult personal problems and often failing. Medical students see their teachers grapple with a difficult medical problem and often fail to solve it or make a mess of it. This is good both for teachers and for students. They see their teacher's patience, his courage, his ingenuity, his tact tried, hard pressed, struggling; sometimes splendidly successful, sometimes a flat failure. Medical students see all this. Theological students will see it when their teachers take their proper place (one of their proper places) in the difficult wrestle of personal relations. Their labors in another of their proper places—in the theological seminary, its lecture rooms and chapel—will then be multiplied many times in value. For with the experiences of the hospital, the asylum, the almshouse, *held in common memory by students and teachers who have faced them together*, the lecture, the sermon, the prayer will be enormously enhanced in educative power.

It will be a searching trial for the teachers,

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but those who come through it will be raised to a higher level, both of spiritual life and of teaching. I know what it is to talk over with students in the quiet of the classroom the problems, often spiritual ones, into which we have put our best strength to solve together in the clinic. Often one thinks more clearly when one gets away from the bewildering onslaught of sights, sounds and smells, from the hopeless discouragement written on the face of a chronic sufferer or the profusion of sophistries fired at one by the hard pressed sinner. Then, after taking counsel with one's students in the lecture room, a better plan of action is evolved and one can go back to the clinic with them next day better armed to meet the ancient foe.

Everyone who meets students in classrooms knows how one is hampered by the lack of a body of concrete experience held in common by students and teacher, serving as a field for illustration, holding discussion down (or up) to reality, linking in profitable union the minds of all present. Clinical work supplies just such a reservoir of common reminiscences into which teacher and pupils can dip when they need it.

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### IV

Theological teaching, Biblical study, systematic theology (that king of all studies!), the construction of sermons and the conduct of worship, would, I believe, find refreshment and invigoration if, between these exercises, the teachers and pupils had been on the firing line together, had suffered and rejoiced together, shared success and failure, been inspired sometimes by the nobility of human nature seen under stress of misfortune or temptation, been disgusted sometimes by the horrors of human nature at its worst and by their own ineptitude and helplessness in the attempt to set up better standards. I believe that young ministers so taught, given such a taste for the need of Christ's gospel and the power of that gospel in suffering and loneliness, would not stop with their "clinical year" but would continue their "clinical work" both in the families and in the institutions of their parishes. Such ministers would also, I believe, become far better preachers; and for this reason, as well as for their greater experience and helpfulness in the great common problems of human personality and human association, they would be more

## A PLEA FOR A CLINICAL YEAR

prized, sought after and rewarded both by their congregations and by the public at large.

### V

But in the institutions where human sufferers are congregated, I think the usefulness of ministers (trained as I have tried to suggest) would be as great as in their own congregations at home. Why I believe this I must explain by a brief digression. Not all my readers, I imagine, are aware that a hospital is almost certain to rise to a better standard of usefulness to its patients and to attain strikingly higher standards—both technical and humanitarian—when medical students and medical teachers become a part of its organization and help to carry on its daily work. Most hospital superintendents know this and manoeuvre by all the means in their power to get and hold connection with a medical school.

This is at first hard to believe. One's first thought is of the interference of students, prone to "experiment" on patients, bungling and callous, invading privacy and modesty by their prying curiosity and their ignorant examinations.

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There is a certain measure of justification for such fears. But on the whole and in the long run there is no question that medical students and medical teachers focus upon the central tasks of diagnosis and treatment an amount of energy and conscientiousness that cannot be attained without their presence. There is less carelessness on the part of nurses and doctors, less neglect, fewer blunders, less reliance on antiquated and useless methods. Criticism and inquiry are in the air. One has to justify one's ways and convince others. One cannot conceal one's shortcomings of patience, one's laziness, one's petty tyranny, one's inhumanity and selfishness—or rather, it is much harder to do so, when the results of one's work have to be shown to students and described in lectures as good examples of modern science, or now and then as awful examples of modern blundering. With such possibilities in view, people brace up and “watch their step.” They may even catch the inspiration and the current of better ways and be transformed inwardly as well as outwardly.

I have described all this in detail because I believe that another and as great a hoisting of standards will take place in these great institu-



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tions where suffering humanity is to a considerable extent at the mercy of those set to care for them, when the clergy, as well as the medical profession, has asked for its chance to learn and to serve in hospitals, asylums and almshouses.

Theological students must come, not occasionally, with a burst of short-lived enthusiasm, but regularly, for prescribed periods and accepting the discipline of the institution—however much they may hope to improve it in the end. They cannot be of use unless they can discern and describe to hospital authorities a regular set of duties calculated to serve the welfare of the patient. The hospital superintendent must be able to count upon the students for regular hours of work, as the French army officers could count on the priests who acted as stretcher-bearers at the front. He must have the right to prohibit the presence of such students as are found to be “trouble makers,” incompetents and hopeless blunderers, just as he now excludes similar misfits among medical students. But if theological students, guided by their teachers, will submit at the outset to such just and reasonable regulations of their activities, they will soon

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find their presence not only tolerated but demanded. They will soon come to fill an essential place in the institution and pressure will come from the superintendent for a lengthening of their term of service, just as the medical interne's service has gradually been lengthened from nine months to nearly two years.

What is the minister or the theological student to do in these institutions? He is to look after the minds, the emotions, the wills, the souls of the inmates as the doctors and nurses now care for their physical welfare. Against this doctors and nurses will certainly insist that they are already caring for the whole patient, body and soul. But just as certainly, they are not doing so. Their attention is too strongly concentrated on the excessively difficult and delicate tasks of diagnosis and treatment. There is not enough attention left to go round. In the purely medical job there is so much to remember, so much to puzzle over, so much to construct and invent, that very few physicians or surgeons have any fresh attention left to give to such problems as: "What is this man thinking about? How is he occupied when I, his physician, am not here? How does he get on with those who

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care for his daily physical needs (nurses, ward-tenders, attendants)? What in his past and in his future is he worrying about? How do his domestic and his economic ties enter into the attitude with which he is now facing his illness and the decisions (operation? convalescent home? change of work?) which it involves? Has he any recreation, any refreshment, anything to occupy his thoughts and his hands, anything to make his days seem to him worth while? Does he have any reason to believe that those engaged in caring for him have a *personal* interest in him (not merely a professional or diffused interest)?”

His physician may retort that the patient is too sick to think of any of these things and would be worse, not better, if anyone (especially a clergyman) forced him to think of them. In some diseases—such as typhoid fever, meningitis, the somnolent or the maniacal phases of insanity, facial neuralgia with sharp pain—this contention is entirely just. The patient’s body is then all that we can care for. His soul is not in evidence. But such cases form a small minority of those in any great institution. For the majority there is a great deal to be done which

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doctors and nurses neglect or have no time for but which the minister and the theological student can perfectly well fit themselves to do and which cryingly needs to be done.

This is especially true of our great public institutions for the insane. Ordinarily hospitals for the sick are invaded by a good many persons who prevent the abuse of patients. Friends and relatives may be there almost every day; women visit the wards in the afternoon; social workers are on hand and even the presence of medical students (as I have said) tends to keep up standards, primarily of physical care, but also of humane treatment. But in hospitals for the insane, there are few visitors, few social service workers, very few medical students. Most of the attendants and nurses are very low paid and this fact, combined with the disagreeableness and hopelessness of the job and sometimes with the element of real danger in it, makes it rarely possible to obtain attendants of a calibre such as to ensure their giving the patients considerate and compassionate care. In a few wards of a few hospitals, the presence of "occupational aides" (i.e. teachers of handicrafts) has begun to lessen the evils that are otherwise inevitable.

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Now and then we hear stories of terrible abuse of the insane by their attendants in public hospitals. Such abuses are quite unavoidable so long as the prices paid to attendants and the quarters and opportunities given them are what they are. Even at the best, the task of attendants in a public hospital for the insane is hard, thankless, monotonous, discouraging in the extreme. The type of attendant to be obtained under present conditions can rarely face such a job without becoming hardened and inattentive, if not cruel.

In my belief the only persons who can be relied upon to face such terrible work continuously and yet to retain their best human qualities are persons of a dedicated life, persons who feel the call to serve their fellows as the first thing in life, reason sufficient for happiness when such service is found, whether there are any of the ordinary rewards that men strive for or not. Such a body of persons is more often found in the clergy and in the religious orders than anywhere else that I know. Hence for the protection and care of the unfortunate insane I can think of no event of happier promise than the "clinical year" for theological students, a part of which might be given to the care of the

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insane. Even though there were not enough men to take the entire care of these poor souls, the presence in the wards of any asylum of even a few students and teachers of Christian ideals and steady compassion would be of great value.

This, like all innovations, would be resisted by the authorities until they came to understand it and until the theologians had become sufficiently initiated in the ways of asylums and in the habits of doctors' minds to adapt themselves successfully to the routine. Until then we should hear it said that theologians were out of place in a medical institution and had better stick to their own job. I have been through all that in the years when I was trying to get social service started at the Massachusetts General Hospital. Our workers were barely tolerated for the first few years. They, too, were told that they had no place in a medical institution and that the administrative officers were already doing all that we proposed to do. So it was in the same hospital, fifty years earlier, when my uncle, Dr. Samuel Cabot, fought the majority of the medical staff to obtain the admission of nurses in training, and was told that only a medically trained man could be trusted to carry out such

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delicate scientific procedures as taking a patient's temperature with a clinical thermometer! But if one is patient and can win a chance to demonstrate the usefulness of a new type of service, the patent facts wear down the fictitious opposition, in time.

### VI

The clinical year for theological students will then be a godsend alike to the students (and their teachers) and to the institutions where their experience is gathered—experience, I repeat, in applied theology, in the practice of gospel Christianity—not in any secular science or sociological discipline.

What Dr. Worcester and I tried to suggest in our talks with the students in Cambridge we knew that we could not teach merely by word of mouth. We realized that it must be learned by combining classroom discussions with such "clinical work" as I have been urging here.

Talking the matter over with theological students at the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge and at Union Theological Seminary in New York, it seems to me that the idea of a

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clinical year appeals to them very strongly. Given a taste of "clinical work" through the talks that I have been describing, the men have felt that they want more. They felt that they did not wish to start parish work without more definite experience and practice in dealing with the sorrows and troubles of their parishioners.

I have not had so good an opportunity to talk the matter over with teachers in theological seminaries, but so far as I have approached them on the subject, I found them quite ready to listen, even to agree. But I realize that until some great leader like Harry E. Fosdick takes up the plea within the ranks of the theological teachers themselves, no outsider is likely to attain much success. To such leaders I appeal. I beg them to give serious consideration to the plan here suggested, to modify and improve it as their wisdom suggests, but to grasp and develop whatever soul of truth there may be in it.



## II: *Ethics and the Medical Profession*

I KNOW no medical school in which professional ethics is now systematically taught. Occasional and sporadic talks may give the students some hint of the subject and of course the ethics actually followed by the teachers in their habits of thought and speech, in their dealings with students, patients, colleagues and "the laity," may be absorbed by their students. Indeed, if the individual student has a chance to see his teacher "in action" outside the classroom, he may learn good ethics in one of the most effective ways—by example.

When I try to think of the most undeniable examples of an improvement in personal character and in ethical standards brought about within a few months by influences which one can put one's finger on, I can recall none so striking as the rapid moral advance of the internes at the Massachusetts General Hospital during a period of years I was in position to observe them when their "chiefs" in the medical and surgical services (F. C. Shattuck, R. H. Fitz, M. H. Richardson, J. W. Elliot and many others)

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were men of inspiring character, as well as of remarkable skill. One could count on it. Callow youths, shapeless souls, would be transformed within the eighteen months of their service, not into saints or heroes, but into something quite miraculously better than they were eighteen months earlier.

Sometimes they copied the mannerisms as well as the ideals of their "chiefs" and assumed fashions of speech or of gait ludicrously foreign to their actual natures. But without an exception that I remember during the years to which I refer, these students gained astonishingly in integrity, in sincerity, in the aspiration for self-improvement conceived, of course, primarily in professional, not in moral terms but including, nevertheless, an infusion of genuine moral enthusiasm. These students have continued, as I have known them in later years, to meet their life opportunities with earnestness, with vim, without pretense or superciliousness, without meanness, with a good deal more honesty, generosity and liberality than their youth gave promise of.

To watch this change of character going on under one's eyes, year after year, in batch after

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batch of hospital internes, would convince anyone—as it convinced me—that it was not “accidental,” that its causes could be identified with something in the leadership of the men under whose supervision these students met the great responsibilities and faced the great eye-openers of their internship. When anyone tries to convince me that character cannot be changed in any important respect by anything that we can do about it, that ethics cannot be taught, and that if men grow better, it is wholly through their own independent and internal metamorphosis, I find myself recalling the stubborn facts of my hospital experience, unable to doubt them. Many others have witnessed those same facts and borne the same testimony. The life of William Osler, and the waves of influence centering in his contacts with young men at Johns Hopkins and thence spreading circle beyond circle across America, is perhaps the most magnificent example of what I mean.

But Osler preached and wrote as well as practiced. The group of men who so signally transformed the lives of their internes at the Massachusetts General Hospital, during the years when I was able to watch the process, were

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men who never preached or wrote about ethics. They would have scorned such preaching or relegated it strictly to the clergy and the "uplifters." They were "practical men" first and last; yet they exerted an enormous influence for the solidification and clarification of their assistants' character. How did their ideals "get across" to their pupils and assistants? I cannot altogether explain it. They never said or implied—"Look at me. Imitate me. Profit by my example"—except in purely technical matters. How to feel a spleen, how to percuss out the "dull" areas corresponding to the position of the healthy or diseased heart, how to listen for the earliest evidences of tuberculosis in a patient's lung, how to hunt through a microscopic field for the parasite of malaria—in these matters I often heard our medical chiefs ask their internes to watch and imitate them.

But when it came to the "technique" of courtesy to most unpromising old wrecks of humanity, of patience with the fretful whimsies of the convalescent, to faithfulness throughout tiresome physical or chemical examinations which one "knew would be negative" (i. e. fruitless) because one had done them hundreds of times

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before and never yet found what one sought, when it was a question of confessing one's failure and facing one's utter helplessness in a moment when everyone looks to the doctor for heroic efforts to stave off death—then there was no teaching given, no moral pointed out, no consciousness of setting an example. *Yet ethical ideals were transmitted*, all the more, perhaps, for the absence of any consciousness on the part of the "chief" that he was doing anything but "minding his business."

The teacher ordinarily is in a very comfortable place. He sits upon a raised platform in a comfortable chair and comfortably lays down the law, tells stories, or questions neophytes on a subject familiar to him. But in hospital work a teacher is often in a very strained position, with a very tired back, or with a still more tired mind, as he reads for the thousandth time a description of the human carcass, written in the cramped and arid style traditional in hospital records. Patients, too, are fractious and unreasonable; humiliatingly often our remedies do no good; our failures stare at us in dumb reproach out of the sick man's eyes. Our work at the hospital is never finished, yet we have still

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our living to earn after we have finally torn ourselves away from the wards.

My teachers at the hospital bore these and many other annoyances. Yet they not only worked with a faithfulness almost contagious, but they maintained and shared their enthusiasm, which may here be conveniently defined as the power to rejoice as one sees, and makes others see, what at first is invisible. I have seen my "chief"—Dr. F. C. Shattuck—step back from a bedside with staring eyes and outstretched hands—"God bless my soul! Did you ever see anything so beautiful as that!" "That? What?" Well, so far as the rest of us could see it was the brown and wrinkled "stomach" of an emaciated Chinaman who had recently vomited a very offensive substance which still stood in a basin by his bedside. But "that," as my "chief" saw it was a delicate wave of intestinal movement, faintly visible through the abdominal wall and casting a moving shadow which traveled silently and swiftly across from right to left, outlining the course of the large intestine (ordinarily invisible) revealing the fashion of its action, and above all, throwing important light on the cause of this patient's sufferings, hitherto in doubt.

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*We* had seen a very unpleasant and rather aggravating specimen of sick humanity. The "*chief*" had seen the graceful action of a mysterious living organ which, ordinarily, we see only when the life has gone out of it. He had seen the wonders of unconscious physiological action, purposeful and accurate beyond anything that we know in the domain of consciousness, yet pathetically invariable in its behavior, so that (as in this poor Chinaman's case) it continued its usual suave, unresting activity, even when the only result was torturing pain. What a mystery is an organ's super-intelligent and exquisite motion, steadily continued when disease has rendered such continuance only a mockery and an agony, yet still deliberate, unceasing, beautifully accurate and full of grace! That is what our chief saw, and the beauty and the horror of it all mingled with his triumph in having discovered what we had not been sharp-sighted enough to see, in having put his finger on the cause of the sufferer's malady and showed the path to be followed in attempting his relief. It was not ethics that we learned from such an outburst. It was the power of wonder, something underlying ethics, something akin to religion.

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Another picture comes before me. We are in the crush and turmoil of an out-patient clinic—female medical—where throughout a long morning we try to solve difficult puzzles, to distinguish and identify faint sounds with the stethoscope, to sift and balance contradicting evidence, to cheer down-hearted sufferers and to keep our tempers. Human figures, voices, smells weave about over our heads as we stoop down, at our knees when we stand upright, over our shoulders, under our upraised arms. Bells jangle, babies (in the adjoining clinic) squall. And in the midst of this we have to write well-considered judgments into records that others must depend on for guidance and to make decisions affecting perhaps the whole future life of a patient and a family. Moreover, to anyone who is sensitive to the mood and to the facial expression of those close around him, the faces and tones of the patients are often a greater trial than the physical distractions of sight, sound and odor. On the day that I am recalling it was 12:45 and we had been at it since 9 o'clock. My out-patient chief was an elderly man, delicate in health, fastidious, gentle, sceptical of medical wisdom, slow in all the mental and muscular



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movements for which such a clinic demands swiftness. He had been toiling through his morning's work—just as he always did—patiently, steadily, but without obvious enthusiasm. He was now seated on a three-legged stool, with a towel across his knees, peering through his spectacles at a student's record of a woman patient whom he had examined earlier in the morning and was now to see and to advise before she left.

She came waddling towards him with a heavy frown. Her expression of blazing scorn was combined with an hereditary and ingrained gloom, expressed in half closed eyelids and a drooping mouth. It is an expression terribly familiar in out-patient clinics. It says: "Leave all hope and all good opinion of yourselves ye who enter here," says it at a moment when one most needs hope and confidence. But it is also particularly irritating. For it seems to accuse you of neglect, folly and incompetence. If you can face it down with a decent composure and with a brisk and business-like manner it is ordinarily the best you can do.

I marvelled, then, when I saw the chief look up from his reading and beam at this minatory

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and demoralized female. His smile had a welcoming warmth when, slightly rising as she approached, he motioned her to a chair, with: "Sit here, if you please, marm." It was all in that last and most unexpected word—old-fashioned courtesy, deference, charming modesty. He brought the atmosphere of a summer garden to meet this miasmic fog. The fog did not yield. The woman showed no slightest appreciation of his kindness, no melting of her scorn. But he carried through the interview as he had begun it and still bowed and smiled to her oblivious back as she stumped sullenly away.

He had no consciousness that anyone was watching him, no desire to teach, and, I fancy, considered himself a failure at the end of that morning, as he so often described himself in general. But at least one of his assistants learned some ethics that day.

I have tried to bring out here the contrast between the comfortable security of the academic platform where the teacher is seen by his pupils in full control of the situation, adequate and successful because he enjoys very special advantages, and the medical teacher seen in the midst of difficulties, grasping at expedients, half a

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failure, but wholly drenched in reality. Surely it is in the presence of the latter that the world's best lessons in ethics are learned.

### II

Yet silent example is not enough for the student of medicine. He wants precept also, explanation after demonstration. And because universities still omit to put any teaching of medical ethics into the curriculum, the students plan ethical instruction on their own accord and call in speakers from outside. This has happened at Harvard every year in the last dozen or so, and I have no doubt it is the same at many other medical schools. For the students really need it. For example: they are uncomfortably aware that they have been told nothing about medical fees or about any part of *medical economics*. Yet they know that very soon they will have to be earning their living and they wish to earn it honorably. They have heard about "fee splitting" (one of the commonest forms of medical graft) and gossiped about the exorbitant fees exacted from rich patients. They have also heard that the doctor is expected to treat a

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good many patients for nothing or for merely a nominal fee. They have heard medical partnerships extolled and denounced and they wonder why. "Contract practice" they hear described as a heinous crime. Yet how it differs from any other work done under contract and why a contract should be honorable in all other fields but disgraceful in medicine, they do not understand (which is natural enough because no one else has ever yet penetrated this mystery of medical phraseology).

Again medical students have had occasion to watch but never to discuss the contrast between the outstanding integrity of the medical teacher in certain difficult medical situations and his readiness to lie on other occasions.

Moreover they want to know about *euthanasia*, that ancient and reliable novelty, that dependable stimulant of readers' interest in the news of the day, that shopworn discussion which the newspapers trick out afresh each year in August when politics are dull and there is dearth of copy.

Students want to hear the pros and cons on the ethics of birth control, of state medicine, of abortion, of the use of bread pills, of medical

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advertising, of proper and improper technique in medical competition and in many other matters.

But since the medical faculty in its wisdom provides not an hour of instruction in medical ethics, all these problems have to be compressed into a few hours of volunteer lecturing arranged for by the students themselves on one of their free afternoons, when they ought to be getting some much needed outdoor exercise.

Yet though as a profession medicine is so extraordinarily reticent about ethics, it has been (so far as I know) the first professional body to formulate its traditions of correct professional behavior, the first to write a *code of ethics* and to acknowledge allegiance to an oath—the ancient Hippocratic oath. In the United States the code of medical ethics was drawn up by a committee of the American Medical Association in 1847 and revised in 1912. Most of the ethical codes of the various trades and professions have come considerably later, as I shall show in another article.

The Hippocratic oath dates from the time of the founder of medicine four hundred years before Christ. It is a curious mixture of sound

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sense, valid for all time, and of pledges which have no application to modern medicine. In it the doctor promises that he will not operate on anyone for stone in the bladder but "will give way to those who work at this practice"—a form of trade unionism not popular among physicians today. But he also promises that "Whatsoever, in my practice or not in my practice, I shall see or hear amid the lives of men which ought not to be noised abroad, as to this I will keep silence." One wishes that such an anti-gossip rule were in force today. Physicians do not, as a rule, take this oath today but they are in strong sympathy with the spirit of many of its clauses and not infrequently devise more modern pledges for medical neophytes in the effort to christen their early work with the solemnity of an oath.

For example: At the University of Michigan—said to be the original from which Sinclair Lewis sketched the medical school in Arrow-smith—a body of students and graduates desiring to raise the ethical and scientific standards of the school, organized not many years ago the Alpha Omega Alpha society. The three Greek letters in its name are the initials

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of Greek words meaning "Fit to serve the suffering."

Last April (1925) in the course of an impressive address with which one of its student members prefaced the administration of the oath to five newly admitted students, at Ann Arbor I heard the following words:

Our Society exists to advance professional ideals among medical students. Your selection (as members) is symbolic to you and to fellow students of the true ideals of the medical profession. These ideals are:

First of all, moral character must be above reproach; no one is fit to practise medicine of whom this is not true. . . . The state and private philanthropy has expended money upon your training not in order that you may yourselves selfishly profit, but in order that you may serve your day and generation in a highly difficult and responsible profession. It is yours to give to your patients the very best of which you are capable. We are confident that you will be guided by this ideal of service. Otherwise you would not have been chosen.

(Readers must realize that these words were spoken by a medical student to his fellow medical students at a private dinner of their club, with no thought of general effect and with none

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of the official temptation to "talk big" to one's pupils.)

At this point I saw five young medical students stand up side by side at their places at the dinner table. Facing them the speaker continued:

These \* are the guiding principles of the medical profession to which we ask you to give assent as members of Alpha Omega Alpha. I therefore demand of you whether you give your assent to these ideals of your chosen profession.

(Space compels me to omit part of what he said, but it was all of a piece with my quotations.)

In an impressive silence, the five boys answered—not theatrically or self-consciously, but quietly and clearly:

We do.

Do you promise hereafter to use your utmost efforts not only to attain these ideals in your own life, but also to maintain and advance them in the profession at large?

We do.

Do you agree to support the Constitution of Alpha Omega Alpha and to aid in every honorable way to enlarge its usefulness?

\* In essentials the speaker had outlined them in the sentences I have quoted above.



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We do.

In the name of the Alpha Omega Alpha of Michigan, I formally declare that you are entitled to the privilege of full membership in the society.

Each of the five then received the official badge and certificate, after which I was called upon—profoundly impressed by what I had seen and heard—to say what seemed appropriate.

Here, then, is another example of how the ethical idealism of the medical student, in the absence of any efforts on the part of his teachers, breaks out and asserts itself. It is characteristic, not of course of all students in all American medical schools, but of a large and influential section in the better institutions.

It is interesting to see the differences between the code of ethics adopted by the American Medical Association in 1847 and the revised form issued in 1912.

1. They should study [says the 1847 code] in their department . . . . . *to unite condescension with authority* [italics mine].

In the 1912 code they have ceased to condescend, but in 1847, one was forced to do so be-

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cause "reasonable indulgences should be granted to the mental imbecility and caprices of the sick."

However much the modern physician may *think* of his patients, he will not say it, even in his code.

2. Another change in the 1912 code reminds me of some of my earlier ethical battles with medical colleagues. This concerns the matter of *professional secrets* which was touched upon in the Hippocratic oath. There the physician swears not to gossip about his patients or to pass along to others the knowledge which he may have about the seamier sides of their lives. In the 1847 code we find:

None of the privacies of personal and domestic life, no infirmity of disposition or flaw of character observed during professional attendance should ever be divulged by (the physician) except when he is imperatively required to do so. . . . Professional men have, under certain circumstances, been protected in their observance of secrecy by courts of justice.

But how far does professional secrecy rightly go?

Suppose a young man is found by his physi-

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cian to have syphilis and despite this fact, to be approaching his wedding day, while his fiancée and her family know nothing of his condition. Is the physician bound by professional secrecy to allow this man to marry a woman who knows nothing of his condition and probably to infect her with a serious disease?

Twenty years ago many of my colleagues said "yes" and were indignant with those of us who said "no." Indeed, a fair case can be made out for the affirmative. The patient has given his physician the facts because he trusted the physician to preserve a professional secret. If all honorable and skillful physicians were known to be ready to betray such a secret, patients might shun such physicians and be drawn into the hands of quacks and shysters.

Nevertheless, I believe today the great majority of physicians would say to such a man: "Put off your marriage until you are cured or at any rate non-contagious. Otherwise either you or I will tell your fiancée." Few physicians would stand by and see an innocent woman suffer such a punishment as would follow if his advice was disregarded. And today much fewer

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men would think of treating any woman in so dastardly a way.

This change in public sentiment is reflected in the 1912 code which enjoins physicians to preserve their patient's confidences as a trust, but adds:

There are occasions, however, when a physician must determine whether or not his duty to society requires him to take definite action to protect a healthy individual from being infected.

Note that it is still left an open question, and that still no duty to the "healthy individual" is recognized—only the duty to society. But in practice these two duties usually prove to be one.

Of course no one is likely to suppose that the writing or signing of a code of ethics secures obedience to it. The code is of interest chiefly because it shows what a fairly representative section of medical men think *ought to be* the behavior of all physicians. What the writers of the code consider important enough to mention and what they leave out, either as unimportant or as too obvious to need mention, are matters of some interest.

As in most other codes of ethics, questions of

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etiquette and of professional custom take precedence over questions of right and wrong. What is seemly, what is good form, what is convenient for the smooth movement of daily work, what can be counted on to minimize friction and keep the peace in the relations of doctor to doctor and doctor to patient, fill most of the code. For example, newspaper advertising of his powers by a physician is contrary to medical ethics. But no one would contend, I suppose, that it was in itself morally wrong. Medical men have explicitly or tacitly agreed not to do it. Hence, anyone who does it is going against the corporate opinion and the usual practice of his group. That is all.

### III

Most of the code contains nothing that is now under discussion, and since this article is concerned with current movements, rather than with settled customs in medical ethics, I will refer to only one other matter.

The code is quite representative of medical public opinion in its strong condemnation of "*contract practice*." At any rate, it certainly

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was so when it was written and no one could be certain of support in any proposition to rescind this condemnation today. But it is noticeable that the code is brief and vague when it comes to define what "contract practice" means. There is a good reason for this, for the attempt to define it would show that any viable definition must cover practices that are very widely recognized, certain to continue and strongly supported by many of us, though still silently frowned on by others.

"Contract practice" means medical services contracted for by a mutual insurance club, by a "lodge," by a manufacturing corporation, by the owners of a mine, by the managers of a department store, or by a concern such as the Life Extension Institute.

The doctor sells his services not directly to a patient, but to a club or a commercial organization which contracts for them in order to benefit the health of its members or employees. This action, it is contended, is commercializing the medical profession and bringing unfair competition to bear upon the private practitioner. For the medical services thus contracted for are sold for a price which undercuts the lowest that the

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private physician can charge and still make a living.

At its worst this system is seen in the so-called "lodge" practice. Membership in a lodge or fraternal order carries with it the right to free treatment by the "lodge doctor" who is paid out of the lodge dues and must attend without fee, any member who is sick. The pay given to the lodge physician is so small and the number of patients whom he may have to attend is so great, that it is impossible for him to give good service, so that I think it is generally agreed by patients and physicians who know much about "lodge practice" that it represents the worst type of medical practice that exists. It is rendered still worse by the "political" manoeuvring necessary for the doctors who compete to secure these positions which, though so miserably paid, are much sought after because the pay, though small, is secure and because, by holding such a position for a few years, the physician gets himself known and when he resigns can step into a better position than he had at the start.

This sort of practice is what "contract practice" originally meant and it is condemned, so

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far as I know, by all physicians, including those employed under it. It encourages disgracefully low standards of medical work, hurried and botched examinations, guesses at diagnosis, treatment that is a wretched farce.

But of late years, after the medical codes had sweepingly and justly condemned *this* sort of "contract practice" because it is bad not only for the physicians who have to compete with it, but for the patients treated under its agreement, there has sprung up the factory physician, the mine doctor, the director of a local health center, the department store physician with his assistants, his nurses, his well equipped clinic and laboratory and his quite sufficient salary. He is doing excellent work and he, those employing him and those whom he treats are well satisfied with the arrangement.

Yet he is selling medical services not directly to a patient but to a commercial concern. He certainly is doing contract practice, and he certainly competes with the private practitioner. Much argument is spent to disprove this. It is contended that he is not treating but preventing disease, that his examinations and his advice are purely for hygienic purposes and that when-



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ever a patient is actually ill, he is referred to his own private doctor and not treated by the company doctor. But the measure of truth in these contentions is not great. In the first place, accidents occurring in the factory are often treated by the factory physician (or nurse) and although the treatment is supposed to represent nothing but "first aid," and any subsequent treatment is supposed to be carried out by the family physician, first aid and the directions that go with it are sometimes all the aid that the patient needs. There is often no after care. Yet if the store physician or factory physician had not existed, some family physician would have earned a fee for attending to the injury. It is the same with the various "medical emergencies," such as "fainting fits," headaches, colds, cramps, etc., which are usually attended to at the plant. Some private physician loses a fee in many such cases.

But this is not all. For the factory or store managers are anxious not only to have illness properly treated when it occurs in their plants, but they are still more anxious to have it *prevented*. Endeavors are made in the plant to teach the employees to take care of themselves so well that they shall not fall ill with anything

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like the ordinary frequency. In so far as they succeed in this, the employers, through the physicians in their pay, are depriving the private physician of his livelihood.

The difference between the "industrial physician" and the "lodge doctor" is that the former is well paid, does good work and does not *so obviously* compete with the private practitioner, while the latter is ill paid, cannot afford the time to do good work and is obviously a competitor. But even here the competition and the loss are not as great as they seem, for the "lodge doctor" is not called in many families if they think the trouble is at all serious; or, if called the first time, the lodge doctor is often soon superceded. So that I think the high-toned industrial physician really brings as much "unfair" competition to the private practitioner as the despised lodge doctor does. At any rate I remember that the "*industrial physicians*" were quite uncertain as to their ethical standing in the eyes of the rest of the profession when a few years ago they decided to form an Association of Industrial Physicians in which they could discuss the interests peculiar to their type of work.

This problem of "contract practice" brings

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out a peculiar feature of medical ethics: that in endeavoring to protect their group interests by rules against certain "unfair" practices, the physicians are likely at any moment to discover that they are acting against the public interest, against the protection of public health. No one defends "lodge practice," but everyone who has studied the subject dispassionately, defends and extols the work of the industrial physician, which is preventive but not *merely* preventive in its effects. So far as I know, the American Medical Association—which represents most of the physicians in the United States and is, on the whole, a very useful body—has never attacked industrial medicine. But, if the Association were consistent, it would attack it as it is now attacking another valuable agency for the preservation of health, namely, the Life Extension Institute.

The Life Extension Institute provides physical examinations for supposedly healthy people, in order to forestall and prevent disease, just as we have an elevator examined periodically to make sure that it will not break down. Having made a good many such examinations myself, without striking benefit that I could see, I was

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sceptical of its being able to accomplish any positive benefits to health until I was convinced by the actuarial figures of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company which show that those who take yearly physical examinations and are given such hygienic advice as the results of examination indicate, live longer than those who do not. Resting on these figures the Metropolitan now offers its policy holders free examinations by the physicians of the Life Extension Institute and pays for those examinations, believing that it saves money through the increased longevity of those so examined.

But the American Medical Association, through its judicial council, protests that these examinations are bad because they ought to be made by private physicians and not by physicians in the pay of any agency which might make money out of the transaction. We have just established a branch of the Institute in Boston and as a member of the group of physicians who are acting as its advisors and endeavoring to promote the public health through furthering these preventive measures, I fall under the condemnation of representative physicians, some of them—like William Sidney

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Thayer of Baltimore—men of the highest and most disinterested character and close personal friends of those whom they condemn. Their argument is that we are commercializing medical service because these examinations ought to be made by the private physician and because no profit ought to be made out of the transaction of examining a patient except by the physician who examines him. No layman ought to get anything out of it, for such laymen may not have the highest interests of the patient in view, but *may* be out chiefly for profit.

Of course all this could be said about the factories and stores employing industrial physicians to keep their employees well. They, too, might have merely commercial and not at all philanthropic aims. Why does not the judicial council of the American Medical Association condemn them too? I know no answer.

The fact that the Life Extension Institute has been losing money or barely coming out square is of course no proof that it *might* not some day make money and be run with money-making as its chief end. The fact that the examinations made in the New York and Boston offices of the concern are preëminently thorough and accu-

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rate, does not guarantee that they always will be so, in the hands of this and of other similar companies which may spring up. This must be agreed to and as a check, I think that such companies as the Life Extension Institute should welcome (as that body does) periodic investigation of their methods by any properly constituted authority, such as state or federal health officers. Industrial corporations employing physicians, should also invite similar scrutiny and supervision.

But how would the private physician like to undergo a similar scrutiny of his records, his laboratory, his methods of examination? And how would he come out under it? Would it be shown that he was always non-commercial, thorough, dispassionate, conscientious?

My impression, from a fairly extensive experience with private physicians' methods, leads me to believe that they would resent such a scrutiny, even if it involved no invasion of the patient's private affairs, and that they would not show up favorably in the art of physical, chemical or psychological diagnosis. In the public clinics, in industrial establishments and in the examining rooms of the Life Extension Insti-

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tute, the check of comparison with others, the records and methods seen by others, the daily companionship and team-work with others who share the responsibility and contribute the advantage of their slightly different angle of vision, all tend to raise and to maintain high standards of work. The isolation of the private practitioner, on the other hand, makes it harder for him to attain and to keep up such standards. There need be no difference in innate ability, in medical school training, in conscientiousness or unselfishness between the private practitioner and the physician connected with a group of physicians in an institution like a factory, a public hospital, a dispensary or a life extension institute. The two sets of men might be identical in their original personal and professional attributes. But I believe anyone who has known both groups will have no hesitation in saying that, on the average, the private physician gives less efficient service, because he works under conditions unfavorable to the attainment and to the maintenance of good standards in medical technique.

The Massachusetts Medical Society considered this year the case of the Life Extension

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Institute recently established in Boston and though not at all enthusiastic about it, decided not to attempt any obstructive tactics. Recently, as I sat around a table with the orthodox and respectable group of doctors composing its advisory board (one of them since elected president of the Massachusetts Medical Society itself), I reflected, with satisfaction, on the change that had come about in the profession since the Committee on Ethics and Discipline of this same society publicly condemned me for advocating the same sort of experiments in public medical service that we of the Life Extension Institute's Advisory Board are now backing. Then I was an abominable heretic, though advocating these same reforms. Now I have become almost orthodox. Soon I shall have become a matter of course.

In retrospect over thirty-five years' observation of the workings of ethics in the medical profession, I avoid any attempt to decide whether we are getting better or getting worse. No such judgment can be better than a guess, colored by the last rumor or story that one has heard. What does seem to me clear is that a medical oath of allegiance and a written code



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of ethics, revised periodically, are of interest (1) as registering ethical advance—not often ethical retreat, and (2) as brakes on our natural tendencies to slip back. They bring medical ethics out into the open and make it less apt to become what G. Bernard Shaw called it, “a conspiracy against the public.”

But in medical men, as in all men, the strongest force for ethical advance has been, in my experience, the intimate contact with other medical men better than ourselves, whereby by “osmosis” nobler habits of thought and action seep across from teacher to pupil, from chief to interne, from colleague to colleague without a word spoken on the subject.

### III: *Ethics and Business*

I KNOW a good deal less about the relations of ethics to business than of ethics to the other subjects taken up in this series—theology, education, medicine and social work. In relation to business I am decidedly an outsider and a greenhorn and although the same is true of my relation to all the other subjects (except perhaps medicine) it is true in a lesser degree. I hope, therefore, that no one will expect from me any pretence to a knowledge of business or to an insider's point of view. All that I can see and say is confessedly as a looker-on. But of late years the looker-on interested in ethics can see more ethics in business than he could fifty or even twenty-five years ago. Business has begun to talk and write about ethics. Ethics has begun to inquire about business methods.

In the attempt to say why this is so I must try to sketch several phases of the era that has passed during my own lifetime.

I was born and brought up under the influence of the evolutionary liberalism of the latter nineteenth century. The smart, "Yankee Doo-

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dle" type of American which Dickens found here in the middle of the century and satirized in Martin Chuzzlewit was passing off the stage. From the point of view of ethics we were in the period when the blight of science—that is, of things as they are—was over everything. We had been foolish enough to accept what Herbert Spencer and his followers were serving up in the sacred name of science. This philosophy in its particular relation to ethics and industry was crystallized in the vague notion of *laissez faire*. We were told to let things alone, especially the things that deal with civilization and business. The fit were bound to survive through the struggle for existence and therefore the fit society, the fit business structure, were sure to come to the fore and to win their way, provided only we left men free. That was the great gospel. "Hands off! Don't get in the way! Leave trade and the laws of trade without interference. The best government is that which governs (and interferes with business) least." For there is (so we had been taught) a natural tendency in human affairs towards improvement, the growth of which had been choked hitherto by the interference of kings, tyrants and priests,

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but which needed only a free chance to lead us towards that "far off divine event" to which the whole creation was bound to move.

Obviously, under such doctrines—and especially when they were promulgated in the name of "science" to a generation so hypnotized by that word that they were not prone to inquire what it meant, ethics was bound to languish, for ethics has always assumed that things are *not* bound to get better but must be *made* better by human effort.

Then America began to feel the challenge of socialism. Now socialism, in its strict Marxian form, is distinctly a hard-boiled, non-ethical doctrine, a remedy of human ills through governmental machinery, resting on a denial of free will. Its doctrines are often hammered home with the brutal assurance that "It does not make any difference what you think about it, *it is coming, anyway.*" Marx was as much beyond the ethical sphere, outside the realm of right and wrong, as was the *laissez faire* political economy which he challenged. Yet somehow there crept into this socialistic challenge of the established order the assertion that this order is *unrighteous* and not merely decaying. By Marxian logic

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the socialists should have told our capitalistic order that it was dying and might as well recognize it. But actually socialists have always been telling us that we are unrighteous. The ideal of human brotherhood which has I think no logical connection with Marxian socialism has, nevertheless, been linked with it in its more effective American manifestations—sometimes in organic unity, as in the so-called Christian socialism, oftener in a loose illogical partnership.

And so American industry has always felt the challenge of socialism as an ethical as well as a political attack. The present system of property rights, the present control of industry has felt itself attacked as something wrong, selfish, not merely as something outgrown. Moreover, the socialistic propaganda had, in common with all sound ethics, the will to change things, not to wait passively for the resistless march of evolution and the inevitable working out of the class struggle.

The general attitude taken by the existing order, in response to this challenge from socialism, I viewed throughout boyhood and young manhood in the pages of the New York

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"Nation." Mr. Godkin's influence there was wholly on the side of evolutionary liberalism and the *laissez faire* school of economics. The evils which he attacked were rarely the evils of business corruption. They were the evils of the wicked politicians, Tweed, Kelley and their successors in New York and in national politics.

My generation was so thoroughly convinced that this was the proper war cry that we were dumbfounded when we read the revelations of Lincoln Steffens and the muck-rakers. It took us a long time to believe what Steffens proved in "The Shame of the Cities," namely, that the corrupt politician was merely the tool of the predatory business interests. But in time we did believe it and then, out of the impetus given by Steffens and his followers, came the "trust busting" activities of Roosevelt and his campaign for the "square deal." For me that was the first emergence of an ethical issue in the field of business.

Roosevelt's interests were primarily ethical, as he himself confessed. It was to this side of him that the nation responded. And it was this which gave him such a measure of popularity as no public man in my generation has enjoyed.

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Honesty was the virtue that he championed, both in business and in politics. He was not interested—as he himself has told us—in economic questions, such as the currency or the tariff. He was very much interested in the sins of the packing industries whereby the American army in Cuba, when he was there with the “Rough Riders,” were given corn meal to eat out of packages labelled “veal loaf.” Here it was not the hygienic but the moral question that interested him. He knew that corn meal was just as good for us hygienically as veal, but he did not relish the lie by reason of which we paid for veal and were given only a cheap cereal. The Pure Food and Drugs Act—which was the result of the agitation started during the Spanish War under Roosevelt’s initiative—marks one of the most definite points at which ethics has entered into business during the last fifty years. This Act broke, in the most definite way, with an old principle long recognized by the law, the principle of *caveat emptor* (the buyer must look out for himself). The government steps in, interfering with the acts of business in order to protect the consumer and declaring that the business man shall label truthfully what he sells.

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There is still no insistence upon hygiene. If people want to buy liquor in the form of Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound or Brown's Iron Bitters they are free to do so. But the seller must put upon the label the percentage of alcohol which these supposed remedies contain.

From Roosevelt's time on, then, the idea that there is a right and wrong—for the individual business man not only in his private capacity, but in his dealings with his employees, his competitors and his customers—has been more or less clearly stamped upon our minds. We have not called it "ethics"—this idea—until very recent times. The word has a scholastic connotation to us; hence the avoidance of it and (so far as possible) of the group of ideas connected with it, is one of the things that one always notices in contacts with business men. I have often been interested to see that when I ask ethical questions of business men, when I inquire whether they think a certain act right or wrong in the field of business, they are prone to shift the issue and to answer, not in terms of ethics, but in one of three other fashions. Try the experiment of asking an ethical question of ten business men and I believe you will find—as I have usually



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found—that seven or eight of the answers will be given in terms of

- (a) the customs of the trade,
- (b) legality, or
- (c) esthetics.

Ask a business man about industrial espionage, about the evils of commercial bribery or of misleading advertisements. The answers that you get are usually couched in some such form as this:

(a) “Well, we don’t do that sort of thing. Our firm has never been in the habit of carrying out that practice. Nobody in our line of business does it. That is the sort of thing that the *small* firms indulge in.” They do not say whether they consider the act right or wrong. They tell you that it is not the custom of their house.

Or, (b) they will argue with you the question of *legality*. Is such and such an act allowable under the law? How broadly can one interpret certain legal phrases? Must one see no violation of the law of the land in doing so and so?

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Or, (c) One is answered in terms of esthetics, that is, of feelings or taste. "Well, we don't *like* that sort of business. That seems a *cheap* way of behaving. We consider that *shady*. Yes, it is a *nasty* trick, but it has to be done."

I have often asked myself why it is that business men thus sheer away from questions of ethics and take refuge in the realm of custom, legality or of personal feeling. I rather think that they are only following the general trend of our time, a trend observable not only in business but among teachers, social workers, doctors and most of those with whom I have lived and worked. Why do we follow it? Why is our generation slow to pronounce things right or wrong, slow to make moral judgments on our own or other people's acts?

I think the first answer is that we hate nothing so much as what is called the "holier than thou" attitude. Whatever else we do or avoid, we do not want to seem *ensorious*. We do not want to set ourselves up as a judge of other people's morals. We never forget the Scriptural injunction, "Judge not." For even those set upon the bench, for the very purpose of judging, are concerned not primarily with morals

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but with legality—a very different matter. Our generation has seen very clearly that one cannot safely condemn any acts but one's own, rather that we can condemn a man's morals only when he condemns himself, since no one can get inside another or know his motives and his temptations. But if we leave morals out of it and abide in the sphere of trade custom or of legality, we face something that is public, objective, definite. There we find none of the subtleties and mysteries of motive and temptation. An act is legal or it is not, customary or unc customary, and if we have any feeling about the act beyond that, we can express it *as a personal feeling*, not as a judgment, in esthetic not in moral terms.

The hesitancy and reserve of the business man, then, when he is asked to express himself in ethical terms, has much to defend it. Ethics is, after all, a very private matter. It is individual to a degree which makes us right in avoiding when we can the attempt to lay down the law for other people or to judge their conduct in specific cases. Nevertheless, as I shall try to show later, trade customs, legal enactments and individual feelings of attraction or repulsion

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are not sufficient guides to conduct in business—or anywhere else.

In 1920, when I first began to look into business ethics at first hand, the characteristic attitude of the business men described in the last paragraphs was impressed upon my mind afresh. I had undertaken an investigation of *industrial espionage* (the spy system in industry), which manifests an attempt on the part of employers to prevent strikes by rooting out labor union men and other “agitators” in their employ through the use of spies, hired from among the members of the union themselves. I interested a vigorous and able young Harvard graduate, Sidney Howard, who is now well known as a writer of poignant and successful drama, but then was free to devote his unusual powers to the study of industrial spies. While he was gathering his evidence, in various parts of the country, accumulating the material afterwards published in his book, *The Labor Spy*\*, I took every opportunity to ask my business friends what they thought of industrial espionage. I was struck with their unwillingness to think of it as an ethical problem at all. To the majority with whom I talked

\* Republic Publishing Co., New York.

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it appeared simply a question of technique. It was a successful or unsuccessful attempt to try to keep one's business running steadily and profitably. Or if further reflection had convinced them that there was more in it than this, they tended to regard the use of spies as a matter of police protection:

"All agitators are dangerous men. One protects oneself against them as one does against those who practice sabotage and the blowing up of factories and bridges. Naturally one *must* protect oneself against dangers of this sort, as a simple matter of business insurance." When dislodged from this position by being shown that in many labor disturbances there is no evidence of any threat of violence until after the spies have been introduced and their presence very bitterly resented by the workmen, the next line of defence is usually this:

"After all, labor troubles are about the same thing as war. In war, of course, we have to use spies in order to get the 'intelligence' necessary for our campaign. So it is with the business man who has his 'under-cover agents' as a part of his intelligence system."

If, then, one asks whether the employer is

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ready openly to declare war and to acknowledge the methods which he employs (as every belligerent is supposed to) I have found that employers usually retreat to their last stronghold.

"Yes, of course it is a horrid business, a dirty mess, but what can you do? How else can we get along? The labor unions have their own spies against us, too."

Perhaps the majority, however, of the men with whom I have talked were ignorant of the very existence of industrial espionage, even though there was sometimes reason to believe that it existed in their own factories.

It was in connection with this investigation into business ethics that I had my first contact with the Harvard School of Business Administration. Inquiring of some of the teachers there what was their opinion of industrial espionage, I found that it was universally and vigorously condemned and in ethical or quasi-ethical terms. It was at this time (about 1922) that I first learned of the project to introduce the teaching of business ethics into the Harvard School of Business Administration. The way in which they purposed to introduce it was of particular interest to me because of my long

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and enthusiastic acquaintance with the "case method" of teaching. Most of the teaching in the Harvard School of Business Administration has been for years carried on by the case method which I introduced twenty years ago in the teaching of the Harvard Medical School on the suggestion of Professor Walter B. Cannon and have used there ever since, following the much older tradition of the Harvard Law School. Dean Donham of the Business School has been planning since 1922 to have business ethics taught in the Business School by the case method and in that year was polite enough to ask my advice about the ethical problems or questions to be sought for in the concrete life of industry and brought back to the school for the use of students. He wished to follow, in relation to ethics, the plan long used in other departments of the Business School, namely, that of gathering from industry concrete cases, problems, difficulties to be written out and presented in case books to the students. In compliance with the dean's request, I presented to him a schedule of seventy-seven ethical questions, arranged under the following headings:

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### TYPES OF RELATIONSHIP IN BUSINESS INVOLVING ETHICAL PROBLEMS

1. Buyer and seller
2. Seller and the public
3. Employer and the public
4. Employer and employee
5. Employer and the government
6. Relations between competitors
7. Fiduciary relations
8. Relations of the employer and of the employee to their own ideals and to the future ("the long run")
9. Miscellaneous

Up to the present time other and more pressing responsibilities of the Business School have prevented the carrying out of the dean's plan, but I know that he still hopes to see it fulfilled in the near future. Meantime, he has been good enough to allow me to give each year a few case-teaching exercises before students of the Business School and has furnished me, from his own collection, some cases which, though originally written out to exemplify a problem in business management or business policy, seemed to involve primarily questions of ethics.

Though I have had very little experience



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with this sort of teaching and am, in many respects, unfit for it, I have already tried it out enough to convince me that it is the proper way to proceed. It is perfectly possible to build up one's principles of ethics in the classroom with the advice and consent of the student body, rather than to enunciate those principles at the outset. Ethical principles can be made to emerge from any dispassionate consideration of the concrete problems which come up in business, as they do in medicine, in education, or in social work. For the ethical principles are already there and we are habitually using them, though in a rather haphazard, confused and sometimes self-contradictory way. All that is necessary is to free them of this self-contradiction, to make them consistent, explicit and adequate to the problems involved, and we have a system of ethics.

A great advantage of this method of teaching ethics—either in business or in any other field—is that by its use many men can be kept busy simultaneously in the classroom. The trouble with the ordinary method of teaching by lectures is that nobody is thoroughly busy except the lecturer. But if one writes out a concrete

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problem in business ethics, has copies of it made sufficient in number so that each member of the class may have one to study beforehand—then when one meets the class (each man armed with a copy of the case) he is ready to ask them questions about it and to discuss their answers until a solution satisfactory—or approximately satisfactory—to all is arrived at. By this method there is no difficulty in keeping everybody busy as well as interested, even with a class of two hundred students.

But there is a difficulty in teaching business ethics, a difficulty formidable enough for the outsider like myself, yet bound, I think, to confront even the business man when he comes to teach business ethics. The teacher has to be extraordinarily familiar with the *trade customs* prevailing in the industry wherein his problem arises. Without a knowledge of these one can get very far astray. Naturally, any school of business wants to draw illustrations from a great variety of industries and occupations, from finance, manufacturing, wholesale and retail distribution, and so forth. But a complete knowledge of the trade customs in all these fields must be a very rare possession if, indeed, anyone

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has it. My own impression is that the best way to teach business ethics is for the professor to have at his side, when he begins the discussion of any case, someone intimate with trade customs of the field in which that particular case lies. The difficulty of trying to apply general ethical principles without such expert advice may be illustrated by the following case, kindly furnished me by the Harvard School of Business Administration.

In offering a lot of wool in the grease to a customer, a salesman of ———— & ———— stated that he estimated the shrinkage in scouring would be 64 per cent. Without scouring a sample himself the customer bought the wool on the basis of this information. When the wool was scoured, the shrinkage was 71 per cent instead of 64 per cent. The customer lost \$300 on the transaction and consequently was greatly dissatisfied with his purchase.

The salesman had made his estimate of the shrinkage after testing a sample, and according to his best knowledge of wool. He was, however, inexperienced and a closer estimate might have been made by a salesman who had been in the business longer. The estimate of the salesman had been made honestly; it is customary for buyers to make their own estimates of shrinkage, since throughout the wool trade the principle of *caveat emptor* is rec-

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ognized in all transactions. No adjustment for the error in estimate, therefore, was made.

In discussing this case with the class I thought it reasonable to believe that even though the principle of *caveat emptor* was usually recognized in this trade, it had not been recognized *by this customer* and that therefore it was wrong as well as poor policy to take advantage of his ignorance or carelessness. After the class discussion a member of the class who was intimate with the customs of the wool trade told me that he was quite sure that I was wrong in this opinion, because the principle of *caveat emptor* was so deeply rooted, so universally recognized that it hardly could have been unknown to *any* customer. His "great dissatisfaction" with his purchase, so my informant said, must have been in the nature of a "bluff." He must have known that he was careless and could not really have expected any different decision. Hence the firm would not lose any standing by its refusal to make an adjustment for the error in estimate.

But though this case illustrates the necessity for a close understanding of trade customs before one is secure in any ethical judgment in a matter which is mixed up with those customs,

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the case does not prove that we ought to give up all attempt to distinguish ethics from the compilation and registering of trade customs. For those customs may be mischievous, harmful, and wrong, even in the opinion of those governed by them. Agreement between the members of a trade does not in itself make anything right or wrong, though a violation of such an agreement without sufficient notice is of course wrong.

Nevertheless since customs can be definitely formulated and codified and since the basis of our ethical judgments is not nearly so easy to agree upon or to formulate, it is undoubtedly tempting to accept the view of Edgar L. Heermance whose book on Codes of Ethics\* has provided us with such a mine of useful information on this subject. Mr. Heermance has collected and published 198 codes of ethics printed up to and including 1924. All but four of these were printed for the first time during the twenty years between 1904 and 1924, and the great majority of them have come during the years from 1920 to 1924, as is shown in the accompanying chart. These codes of ethics concern every conceivable trade, such as ice-cream dealers, tailors, hair-

\* Free Press Printing Co., Burlington, Vt.

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dressers, undertakers. Together they give us an extraordinarily interesting picture of the trade customs and ethical standards thus far recorded.

Without trying to answer for the moment the question: "What value has such a code of ethics, what effect does it have on the actual behavior of the persons concerned?" I will deal first with the problem: "Why has there been such a tremendous accumulation of these codes within the last five years?" Without presuming to decide this question in any final way I think it is arguable that an important factor in producing the recent tremendous output of ethical codes was the origination by the Federal Trade Commission of that extraordinarily interesting procedure named by them a *Trade practice submittal*.

The Federal Trade Commission, as many readers remember, was organized March 16, 1915, to carry out the provisions of the Clayton Act of October, 1914, itself closely related to the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890. The object of the Clayton Act was to prevent the elimination of competition through such an agreement as would constitute a violation of the anti-trust laws. Whatever tends substantially to lessen

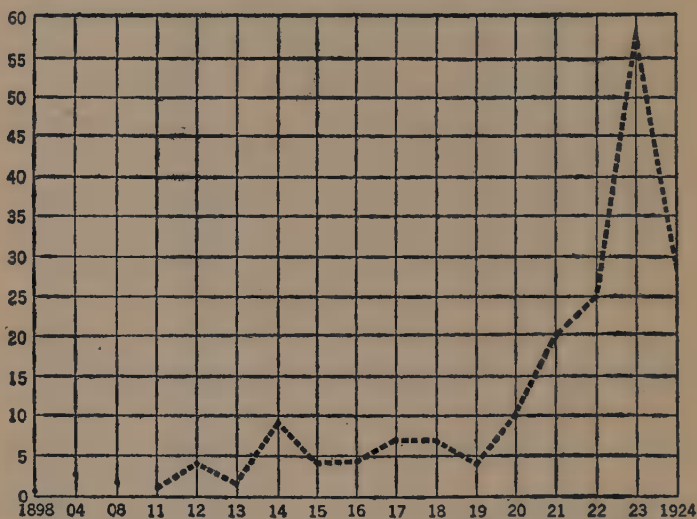
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competition or to create a monopoly in any line of commerce falls under the prohibitions of the Clayton Act. The administration of this Act falls in part upon the Interstate Commerce Commission, in part upon the Federal Reserve Board, and in part upon the new Federal Trade Commission organized in 1915 soon after the passage of the Clayton Act.

In November, 1918, the Federal Trade Commission in its efforts to interpret and enforce the laws against unfair competition began the practice of asking all the representatives of a given trade to come together and work out in coöperation with the commission what the trade itself considered to be "unfair" methods of competition. The result of such an agreement was then used by the commission as a basis for future corrective action within the jurisdiction and under the judicial decisions which govern its procedure. Since November, 1918, there have been nineteen such trade submittals, sixteen of which have been worked out since 1920. A glance at the chart will show that the year 1920 marks the beginning of the swift increase in the number of codes of ethics worked out and published by the different trade associations.

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From the point of view of a teacher of ethics, this procedure of the Federal Trade Commission is of extraordinary interest. Here we find



The numbers at the left indicate the number of codes of business ethics published. The chart shows the distribution, by year of publication, of a total of 198 codes. The dotted line marks the years in which the Federal Trade Commission made its first "trade practice submittal."

Uncle Sam asking a group of men *to state their own code of ethics*. If then they commit any act contrary to this code the government can condemn them out of their own mouths and without any of that appearance of arbitrary action



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which we always fear when we try to settle a point in ethics involving someone else's conduct. I say "a point in ethics" and not merely a point in law because in its own statement regarding *methods of competition regarded as unfair*, the Federal Trade Commission lists\*:

- (1) Methods involving an element of moral turpitude since they are characterized by fraud, deception, misrepresentation, intimidation, or some similar wrongful element.
- (2) Methods condemned by the common law.
- (3) Methods not involving either of the above elements but placing restraint upon the freedom of particular competitors to compete or otherwise restraining trade to the detriment of competitors and the public.

Of what use is a code of ethics? As I have been familiar for many years with the *medical* code of ethics, which was one of the very few antedating the present century, and have seen how little effect it has on the behavior of physicians, I am not sanguine about any reform of business ethics to be produced merely by the formulation and publication of a code. The main question is how is it to be *enforced*? So

\* Annual Report 1920, p. 48.

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far as it merely reproduces the provisions of a law such as the Clayton Act, it is obvious that violations of a code can be enforced and punished by law. But there are many matters referred to in these codes which do not fall under any legal prohibition. My secretary, Alice G. O'Gorman, has tabulated for me the principles underlying the 198 codes of ethics printed in Mr. Heermance's book, as well as some of the unfair practices condemned there. These are shown in tabular form below. (The numbers in the text represent the number of codes in which a stated principle or practice is mentioned.)

### THE PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING 198 CODES OF BUSINESS ETHICS

#### *Justice.*

"Golden Rule" (40), "Square Deal" (21),  
"Those who help me, I help" (1). Total=62

*Service* (36), "Forget self, Our Profession first"  
(1). Total=37

*Public Welfare* (18), Lift the level of human ideals  
(5), Advance educational ideals (1), Mutual  
benefit of industry and public (1), Identity of in-  
terest (1), "Business ideals, better business meth-  
ods and a high standard of Products and Service"  
(1), Use for general good (1), "The belief that

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my business has an elevating and refining influence on Society will act as an inspiration in the discharge of my duties as a Craftsman and Citizen" (1). Total=29

### *Veracity.*

Truth (9), "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest" (1), "Truth, justice courage" (1), "Keep the faith" with clients, fellows, community (1), Confidence (1), Honor (3). Total=16

### *Responsibility.*

Individual responsibility (6), "Ultimate moral responsibility rests on executive notwithstanding outside support or control" (1), Obligation to American home (2), Obligation to pupils (1), Duty to God (1), Duty to God and our flag (1), Duty to public and ourselves (1), Noblesse oblige (1). Total=12

### *Other Principles.*

#### Coöperation

"All to the end that our chosen business may be known as a genteel business as well as a fairly prosperous one" (2) "Anglo-Saxon ideals and historic Americanism" (1). Total=3

## PRACTICES CONDEMNED IN 198 BUSINESS CODES AS "UNFAIR COMPETITION"

*Bribery* (subsidies, commissions paid or accepted, bonuses, rebates, incompatible side lines, working for competing firms) (96), Discriminating favors

## ON THE BORDERLANDS OF ETHICS

(14), Offering special advantages, e. g., credit, banking service, guaranteeing positions (17), Lotteries, premiums (4), Bootleg liquor to customers (1). Total=132

*Running down competitors* (slander, condemnation) (81), Comparisons with others' products except on the basis of published information readily verifiable (1), Drawing attention to failure of apparatus of competitors when it cannot be known whether it is due to defect or to abuse or misapplication (1). Total=83

*Untruthful, Unfair Advertising* (47), Unprofessional advertising (11), Advertising in unproductive media "is unethical" (5). Total=63

*Misrepresentation*, misstatement, deception, omission (exclusive of advertising). Total=60

*Soliciting others' business or work* (39), Soliciting practice (1), Promising cures (1). Total=41

*Price-cutting* (below cost or fair profit) (31), Competition for employment on basis of salary (1), Bargain sales (1), "Leader" selling (2). Total=37

*Enticing others' employees* 32

*Unfair Competition* (intensive, destructive, vicious) (18), To claim or exercise a monopoly (4), To tamper with competitor's business or goods (3), To hamper movements of competitor's products (2), To induce strikes among competitor's employes (1), Injury by [patent] litigation where case has no merit (2), Stirring up litigation (1),

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Minimum purchases to keep competitor from getting line (1). Total=32

*Spying* (5), Information through bogus customers or employees (8), Appropriating competitor's designs or advertising matter (22), "piracy" (3), "shopping" (1). Total=39

Working on speculation 5

Taking advantage of social opportunities 2

To enforce the principles desired and to prevent the practices condemned, some industries have worked out their own machinery and apply it to their members. Another group, and a rapidly increasing one, are formulating arbitration agreements which amount to little courts like the Federal Trade Commission, only voluntarily arranged by the persons most concerned. With these two methods for the enforcement of the principles outlined in the new codes of ethics I think we may hope for a real improvement. In the case of one trade association, the Boston Better Business Association, which has to do with methods of advertising used in Boston industries, I have had an opportunity of seeing something of how the machinery of enforcement actually works. Misleading advertisements, which are not so misleading as to fall under the

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provisions of the law, e. g., those which involve labeling of fur goods and various textiles, are regulated by voluntary agreements and violations reported weekly by agents employed by the Association for that purpose and are checked through the activities of the Association itself. This seems clearly to indicate a movement in the right direction, that is towards ethical self-control by the members of a group organized in a trade for that purpose.

*To work out definite understandings between competitors and also between buyer, seller and public, and then to abide by these understandings in letter and in spirit is certainly an essential minimum of any sound ethics in the field of business. Such understandings are like the rules of any game. We must make them clear, agree upon them and abide by them, otherwise we have chaos. To many this seems enough. Thus in the admirable little code published by Edward A. Filene\* business ethics is reduced to the single formula *Producing and selling what the public wants as cheaply as possible and under conditions fair to employes.**

\* Edward A. Filene: *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, Phila., May, 1922.

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This is splendid so far as it goes. But I think one should add that it is also the duty of the business men sometimes to give the public something better than they yet clearly demand, because they do not know enough oftentimes to demand what they really want. Following a similar train of reasoning I should say that besides clearly stating our agreements and then being faithful to them in letter and in spirit we should always strive to better these agreements, as we are always trying to improve our football rules. Certainly we must keep our promises. That is *minimum ethics*, although if followed out in letter and in spirit it would carry us very far above the average ethics of the day. But besides keeping our promises we should see deeper into the meaning of the desires which led us to make these promises, and on the basis of a new reading of these desires we should revise and improve our agreements.

The ethics that means *faithfulness to the rules of the game* is an essential minimum. Many industries have not, I imagine, got nearly so far as this. The rules they follow are very vague and shifty. Hence, written codes, enforced through arbitration agreements or otherwise,

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are of great value because they force vague understandings to take clear unambiguous shape. But to be satisfied with this is to say that "whatever is is right" and that *standing pat* is good enough for us. Every code embodies the progress of a living impulse to better things, an impulse which like the search for truth is always moving, never satisfied. "Normalcy" soon grows abnormal, because the master desire of mankind, out of which all ethics springs, never knows the whole of its own meaning. Let us return for a moment to Mr. Filene's formula. "Give the public what it wants, cheaply and under fair working conditions." That is a vast improvement over the business practices which are content with "success" in the sense of financial profit even if gained by disservice to the public. Mr. Filene rightly pictures the business man as a public servant, paid for good service. But perhaps the public does not always know what it wants? That possibility is not covered by Mr. Filene's earlier formula.\* Let us look into it further.

The public takes what it finds or what it can

\* In later writings he has greatly improved on this earlier statement of his principles.



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get and in this act looks very much the same as if it was getting what it wants. But is the public proved to *want* all the idiotic fashions in women's dress merely because they are accepted? Did Barnum's public really *want* to be fooled (as he said), or did it merely *accept* his fraudulent "mermaids" and "missing links" because it was gullible? A public "demand" is supposed to exist for whatever actually sells well and the supply emerges in response to this "demand." But can anyone seriously maintain that people *want* all the wildcat stocks, all the bad whiskey, all the rotten drama and music, all the lying newspaper headlines which they pay for? What other evidence have we that they want them except the fact of payment?

In one sense of course the morphinist "*wants*" his dope and the thief certainly gives good evidence of wanting the money that he steals. But nobody thinks that such demands are justified on their face value. In another sense we want whatever wages or salary we get—no matter how low. We would rather have it than nothing at all. In still another way we can be said to *want* all the laws that are on the statute book (whether we know them or not) because we have ac-

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quiesced in their existence, or at any rate have not made organized or effectual protest against them. But none of these "wants" need be taken as expressing the person's fundamental desires, or taken as a justification of anyone who helps him to satisfy these wants and no more. Else all actions would be right since all express desire.

I think we all know well enough that we owe it to every man to help him towards the expression of his own poorly expressed wants and to accept his help towards *finding* out as well as towards carrying out what we ourselves want. This is a deeper coöperation, more helpful than that by which people share in the execution of desires already clearly known or accepted without question.

This is perhaps the core of Christian ethics: to go with a man twain when he asks our help for one mile, to give people what they don't dare ask for and have no right to claim but verily need—to accept more than we know how to hope for and know we do not deserve.

I have seen this "maximum ethics" rather seldom among business men and rather seldom anywhere else. Clergymen, as I have seen them, do chiefly what is demanded by their parishes,

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doctors what is expected by their patients, teachers what their position seems to call for, social workers what their employers and their clients have grown used to. It takes courage and faith to give more than is asked at the risk of being called a fool or neglecting to keep the machine running, and none of us has enough of this courage or this faith in business or out of it.

So I find in the little that I have seen of business ethics the same three stages that are apparent in other professions:

1. *Each for himself*; so far as he can get away with it.
2. *Minimum ethics*; acting according to "the rules of the game" agreed upon, explicitly and implicitly.
3. *Christian ethics*; a sample of which is the effort to satisfy real, deep and permanent desires and not merely obvious desires, in others as well as in ourselves.

#### IV: *Ethics and Education*

**I**S any sort of education worth while unless it is centered in *ethical education*? With this question I was brought face to face by the World War, which was, so far as I see, due to the natural foolishness and selfishness of man quite unrestrained, if anything made more effective, by our present style of education, that is, by our increasing general enlightenment, and by the possession of that body of impartially transmitted information based on natural science which the liberal tradition of the nineteenth century had counted on to make men civilized and therefore good. The educational creed of our grandfathers was based on the belief that man hitherto has been smothered in ignorance and *therefore* has behaved no better than he should. Give him truth and you make him free. When free of ignorance and oppression he will choose the right by the natural trend of his being.

The World War showed to my thinking that education so conceived is, like physical science, a blessing or a curse according to the purposes for which its results are used. If there is no

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*education of men's purposes*, if there is no ethical basis at the foundation of education, then the more we know, the smarter villains and livelier crooks we may be. Knowledge, whether we call it by the Latin name of "science" or not, is ethically neutral. Like a hatchet it can be used to construct or to destroy. It has no ethical trends of its own. If ethics is left out, the more highly educated we are the worse. For the highly educated man without ethics is only the more dangerous beast equipped with that collection of tools which modern science puts at his disposal.

Reading, writing, mathematics, geography, history, the natural sciences, the foreign languages, constitute a basket of valuable and dangerous tools. They incline us neither to do right nor to do wrong. With strict neutrality they give us the means of doing good or doing evil, whichever our natures and our temptations lead us to prefer.

All this was of course just as true before the World War brought us face to face with the violation of Belgium, the secret treaties, the use of poison-gas and submarines, or the organized and perfected lie-factories of propagandic at-

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tack and propagandic defense. But never, I take it, had education been used so effectively to spread lies and hatred among men, women, and children as in the years 1914-1918, through that terrible instrument since then become so familiar under the caption of "propaganda." The use of this instrument upon me and its effects upon me during the war are among the most gruesome of my adventures on the borderlands of ethics—where ethics is touched and may be blighted by "education."

So I came home from France after the war branded with the conviction that non-ethical education was just as apt to be a curse as a blessing and that so far as science (and especially biology) was taken as the guide to educational method and education we were doing nothing in our schools to prevent or to postpone another hideous world-disaster, like the Great War.

But is our present educational system in school and college non-ethical? Is ethics, the attempt to mold the purposes of youth for virtue, left out of our public school system and our colleges? I have often discussed this question animatedly with my wife who knows vastly more about it than I do, and who in the end usually convinces

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me that I am in the wrong. I point to the utter moral neutrality of the curriculum. But she reminds me of the sturdy moral sense of the teachers, made effective not chiefly through the teaching of reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography and the other studies, but through their perpetual influence on pupils and through the maintenance of good order, good manners, and good humor. It certainly is true that ethics as an influence is not left out of our educational system, because character inevitably talks, and because the relations of teacher to pupil and of pupil to pupil must hammer out some code of habits and understandings.

But is this enough? Should all direct teaching of ethics be left out of the curriculum? South Dakota and several other states have made the teaching of morals part of their state school law. This is a fine beginning. But we need to follow it up. Should the ethical bearings of history, of literature, of hygiene be suppressed? Pure science and "art for art's sake" would say "Yes." The main purpose of this paper is to utter as vigorous a "No" as I can, and to narrate what I have seen and done in consequence of this attitude.

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In the autumn of 1919 President Lowell offered me the chair of Social Ethics at Harvard. I accepted it with enthusiasm, for it gave me the opportunity to do my bit in that effort to "put ethics on the map," an effort which then seemed and still seems to me close to the most important thing in the world. I was ready enough to give up the practice of medicine in which the distressing ethical neutrality of scientific effort had often enough made me aware that I was trying to help a man back into a position where with his renewed health he would do even more harm than before. Sometimes I thus aided men to commit their crimes. Of course there are opportunities in medical practice for encouraging people to act up to their convictions. But that is never one's chief business as a doctor. Health is one's main objective, and that, like ordinary non-ethical education, is morally neutral, as effective a tool for evil as for good.

But when I came to the task of preparing myself to teach social ethics—the ethics of human relations—I had to answer the objection forcibly put to me by an English acquaintance when during the summer of 1920 I settled in the ancient English hamlet of Kingham to work up my new



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Harvard courses. Said he, "*Your plans assume that ethics can be taught; but that has yet to be shown.*" The remark reminded me of a distinction in one of Bernard Bosanquet's essays, "between teaching ethics and teaching *about* ethics." It is easy, as Bosanquet showed, to talk around and about the subject, its genesis, its history, its theory, its subject-matter, and yet never to make anyone any more ethical, never to develop any better character, any better habits of thought and action in one's pupil. That is hard and rarely attempted.

This distinction between teaching ethics and teaching *about* ethics is of great importance, I think. It is like the difference between teaching people about music and developing musical capacity in them. One can write or lecture entertainingly about music without any great effort or capacity. But to make another person musical is another task, difficult in any case, impossible unless there is native capacity in the pupil. For when in a naturally musical person a love, an understanding, and a proficiency actually do appear, it is hard to be sure that teaching has had anything to do with it. One can teach the technique of performance, the ability to chatter

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plausibly about music, and the habit of attending and applauding concerts. But all this is not the delighted perception of musical beauty or the ability to express oneself in music. These seem to come not from without but from within. These seem to be individual, different in each genuine lover of music, spontaneous, incommunicable. Can one really teach music at all?

Yes. Everyone knows that in music, as in any other art, teaching *has* its place. One cannot listen or play or compose for anyone else, but one can direct his attention to something previously unheard, one can share with him one's own enthusiasm, which is often contagious, one can help to keep him working in the mine from which he is to cut out his own nuggets of beauty. It is true that the central core of his musical appreciation, the central act of his musical expression is a holy of holies into which no other can enter. Each must enjoy and act, off his own bat. But others are nevertheless of use to every student of art. In fact he can't avoid their influence. He never studies alone. His teaching may come chiefly from the old masters, the great composers, the inspired writers. But still the personality of another has always helped to de-

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velop him, and that is teaching. The living teacher is of use in calling attention not only to the existence but to the special beauties of great works of art. By emphasis, by analysis, by interpretation, one may lead the student to the springs of beauty and though one cannot make him drink, without us he might never have found the water at all.

I have written these long paragraphs about the teaching of music and about the unteachable part of it because we can see here the same difficulties that challenge any plan of teaching ethics; and yet at the same time we can see and everybody knows that in music, teaching is invaluable. No one who seriously wants to be musical goes without it.

So I conclude that if ethics cannot be taught, no art can be taught, no literature can be taught, no history can be taught except by rote, no science worthy the name can be taught. For sooner or later we reach in each of these subjects (as in ethics) a citadel inviolable, where the spontaneous and unique personality of the individual must see, appreciate, choose, express itself and no other. Yet in ethics as in all other subjects essential to human life, the individual's own

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thought, act, perception can be aroused, nourished, strengthened, given pause, startled into fruition, prepared for by labor—all through the influence of teachers living and dead.

But the chief obstacles to the teaching of ethics, as I meet them, are not the pedagogical qualms of the teacher but the spirit and atmosphere of our time, dominated as it is by physical science and by our industrial system. The best known teachers of ethics still shrink (as they did when I was in college forty years ago) from trying to make their pupils better men, not because the attempt is fruitless but because of modesty and because the attempt is intellectually unfashionable. The pedagogic fashion of our time is against the attempt to influence anybody in any direction. Teachers are in good form when they modestly present the facts as science is supposed to, without bias. To try by our teaching to influence any student to act in any particular way would be an invasion of his rights. Who are we, his teachers, to set ourselves up as models, or to force any one set of moral ideas upon him? The student must be free to make his own choices and to go his own way. We, his teachers, may set before him the different ethical systems, in-

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cluding our own. But that is all that we can properly do.

So I was taught in my day. So most high-minded and conscientious ethical teachers are talking today, so far as I know. They are too modest and unassuming to teach ethics. They confine themselves to teaching *about* ethics. Nor have their students any idea of being changed in character. I have never got over the shock of discovering that the men with whom I took Philosophy 4 under Professor George Herbert Palmer as a Harvard undergraduate had no idea of bettering themselves, of changing their habits or building up their own plan of life. They took ethics "as a part of general culture"—to find out what it was about, not with any practical aim concerned with their own characters.

This I abhorred and still abhor. When I accepted the chair of Social Ethics I pledged myself to the adventure of trying to make men better themselves, the most unfashionable attempt, I suppose, in all the modern educational world. I hoped and still hope to do in ethics what any competent music teacher does in music, namely, to stimulate men to grasp for themselves something which includes the best that I know. No

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music teacher is neutral in what he presents to his pupils or in what he urges them to work for. If he thinks Jazz is the height of musical achievement he teaches Jazz. If he admires French, Russian, Hungarian, German music, he will suggest the study of the best music in these nationalities. He does not say, "Who am I to bias this young soul—my pupil? My best insight may not be what he needs. I may be all wrong." No. He sturdily proceeds to urge upon his pupil's attention the best that he knows, and to hope that his pupil's attention may be caught. He helps to make him a good musician, by which he does not mean one devoted to any single kind of music but to all good music. If the pupil wishes to compose, his teacher will still urge upon him the best models of the past and of the present, as springboards from which the pupil's original genius may take its leap. "The best," that is, what he, the teacher, considers the best. He cannot be neutral without treachery to his own ideals, without time-serving. He must take his chance of misleading his pupils, convinced that no honest enthusiasm for a particular cause can do as much harm as an attempt to

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appear neutral when he knows that he isn't and can't be.

In beginning my teaching of ethics with these ideals I was the more confident of being on the right track because I had watched since 1894 the teaching of ethics (not about ethics) carried on by my wife in private school classes for girls from sixteen to twenty. I knew from the testimony of some of these girls that the teaching of ethics is possible. It has occurred. So I was only joining my wife on a path which she had followed for over thirty years, and had led to the publication of her *Everyday Ethics*\* and *Ethics for Children*\*\*. In these books and in her teaching she has followed the principle that one way to teach ethics (and not merely to teach about ethics) is to practice pupils in the formation of good habits of thought. Among the rather few good mental practices that one can help to form in the classroom is the habit of good thinking, under which should be included not only logical thinking but also honest and sympathetic thinking. "Ethics help us:—

\* *Everyday Ethics*, by Ella Lyman Cabot; Henry Holt & Co., 1906.

\*\* *Ethics for Children*, by Ella Lyman Cabot; Houghton Mifflin Co.

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1. To think straight and not to deceive ourselves.
2. To think clearly and not lose our heads.
3. To think sympathetically on many sides of a question.

(*Everyday Ethics*, p. 354)

These standards can be built up when students are led again and again, in class discussion or in written papers, to ask and to answer questions about their own personal problems or about problems which they can be led imaginatively to face as their own. This method of teaching, which is akin to the case teaching long used in the Harvard Law School and in the Harvard Medical School, sets concrete situations before the student and then focuses attention on the methods of thought which he uses in analyzing these situations. For instance, in discussing cases in which the duties of courtesy or kindness seem to conflict with the duty of veracity, students are almost certain to assert sooner or later that "sometimes one simply *has* to lie." The conclusion follows that in such cases it cannot be wrong to lie since one cannot help it. This deeply rooted and fallacious habit of thinking can be exposed and its extirpation begun by in-



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quiring why one "*has to lie.*" Is it *physical necessity* like that which governs one's motions as one falls out of a window and perhaps injures a passer below? Obviously we are under no such compulsion when we tell a "polite lie" or philanthropically deceive a sick man about his condition—the students' favorite examples of the times when "*one must lie.*" Is it then logical necessity, such as prevents a man from eating his cake and having it too? Clearly not. Well, then, what kind of necessity (not physical or logical) is it? By a little further questioning the students can be led to see that it is not *any* sort of necessity at all but an excuse. This can then be brought out more vividly by showing that it is when people are in need of a plausible excuse to cover up their discreditable actions that the plea of necessity is most often advanced. Necessity is the classical excuse:

(a) Of children: "I couldn't help it, mother. Charlie made me do it."

(b) Of diplomats: "The Imperial German Government therefore *finds itself obliged*"—to do what it in fact intends to do—to back up Austria in punishing Serbia, to violate Belgium, or what not. So America starts a rascally assault

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on Mexico and grabs Texas eighty years ago, not because we wanted Texas but because our "manifest destiny" *compelled* us. Necessity is always the language of diplomacy, as it is of the modern sex novels in which lovers are always guided by "ungovernable passions," by "irresistible desires," in other words by necessity. That this is all bunk the students soon perceive with a laugh that makes them a trifle clearer-sighted when they are next tempted to fool themselves with the hoary old "necessity fallacy" so popular with all who want a good excuse for doing what they know is wrong.

I am relating now one of my experiences or adventures in following my wife's example. This is the method and these are the ideals that I have pursued in one of my ethics courses at Harvard. The sort of drill in honest, clear and sympathetic thinking which students can be led to give themselves as they write, talk and are criticized by their fellow students and by their teacher, tends steadily and by repetition to uproot habits of haziness, self-centredness, self-deception and to build habits of honest thinking. This is teaching ethics, largely self-teaching, not lecturing or reading *about* ethics.

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But this is not the only, or in my experience the best way to teach ethics. Another educational adventure in the field of ethics has interested me very deeply during the past six years' work with Harvard undergraduates. I was led to it by remembering that the deepest and most permanent moral influences in my own life had been intimate contacts with people (living or dead) whom I intensely admired. Admiration itself, together with the understanding to which it leads, is capable of transfusing some of the hero's valor into his admirer. Is it not true in the lives of most of us that we have been helped most by people who said not a word to us about ethics, but who lived their lives close enough to us so that, as we watched and admired, often loved them, we began to feel their motives active in us? I believe that most of us have been kept as decent as we are, have been prevented from being worse than we are, because of a few people who never tried to influence us at all but whom we could not help being drawn to by love and admiration.

Following up this lead I have been conducting an experiment which is now called Social Ethics 16, The Appreciation of Personality. In this

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course I try to bring before the class personalities, living or dead, whom I strongly admire and whom I think my students can be led (through meeting them in class or through reading their biographies) to admire too. A man whose eyes and hands were destroyed many years ago by an explosion of dynamite, tells before the class the story of his accident, of his slow tortured recovery, of a morphine habit acquired and broken, of the struggle to learn to dress himself, feed himself, buy and sell, travel, earn his living without eyes or hands. I ask the reader to visualize in detail, as my students do, what this involves, to follow in imagination his economic success as a lecturer, his marriage, his travels back and forth across this continent alone and among strangers to give his "Shakespeare readings," his talk on "Optimism," and the other lectures by which he now supports himself very comfortably.

I do not point any moral or attempt any ethical adornment of this story. But I am sure that my students are the better (as I am), and not merely the more enlightened for having heard it. Almost as much they profit from reading and discussing the life of Pascal d'Angelo, son of

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Italy, the pick-and-shovel poet of New York, and the heroic struggle of Robert Scott to save his dying comrades on the slow and fatal journey back from the south pole. The contagion of these great personalities is the most effective teaching of ethics that I know. I do nothing but point to them and try to share my enthusiasm for their nobility and heroism, not by talking about their qualities but by making sure that their actual facts, deeds, words, land in the students' minds. It is a most exhilarating adventure and the most intense enjoyment (next to playing in a string quartette) that I know.

With these experiments in mind I have been greatly interested to watch the new explorations of the Boston School Committee in the attempt to teach ethics in the public schools, by a plan crystallized in a pamphlet called

### THE BOSTON COURSE IN CITIZENSHIP THROUGH CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT.\*

In 1914 a business man (anonymous) . . . made up his mind *that . . . the moral education of all the children was a fundamental neces-*

\* Printed by the Boston School Committee, 1924.

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sity and offered a prize of \$5,000 for the best "children's code of morals." The competition took place in 1916-17 and seventy codes were handed in. The prize was awarded to William J. Hutchins; and the Hutchins morality code for children, a four-page leaflet, was published.

The same anonymous donor then offered \$20,000 to the author of "the best public school method of character education" to be written between October 1, 1919, and February 22, 1920. Twenty-six plans, collaborated in by 432 persons, were submitted. Their work was guided by an attempt to answer the following questions: How to get children to appreciate and to understand the wisdom of moral experience? How to develop in children's minds personal convictions on morality and the will to live up to these convictions? How to correlate home life and school life for character development? What character education should be given to teachers themselves and how shall they be enlightened as to the moral ideas to be inculcated in school and the way to inculcate them? The prize was awarded to the Iowa Plan, a pamphlet of 46 pages, 5,000 copies of which were then printed

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for distribution in the United States and abroad, at the donor's expense.

This very comprehensive and valuable plan, however, was not the main basis of the Boston experiment of 1925. The Hutchins code was its most direct ancestor. This begins with a series of "laws" which "for the sake of our country's greatness" should be obeyed:

1. Self-Control (tongue, temper, thoughts, acts).
2. Good Health (hygiene, body and mind clean, skill, strength).
3. Kindness (in thought, word, act).
4. Sportsmanship.
5. Self-Reliance (courage, independence).
6. Duty (not shirking, or living on others).
7. Reliability (no lie or theft).
8. Truth (vs. hasty prejudice, thoughtlessness, and the lie).
9. Good Workmanship.
10. Team Work (order, thrift, cheerfulness).
11. Loyalty (family, school, government, humanity).

The Boston plan accepted all these, merged No. 7 and No. 8, slightly rephrased some of the others, and added: "Obedience to duly constituted authority."

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"Citizenship" is defined in a rather startling way as: "So living together that the best interests of the whole group are always furthered by thought, word, and deed." Under this definition a group of sailors on a vessel in the mid-Pacific or of arctic explorers at the North Pole might in their daily work be exercising the duties of citizenship. But of course citizenship is a convenient (because colorless and harmless) word. Character is more enlighteningly defined as "that which causes a life to be dominated by principle rather than by mere impulse or by circumstance."

In each grade a period of fifteen minutes daily at the opening of school is assigned for an ethical exercise. But in all the rest of the school work and play ethics is to be brought into action in relation to the subjects of the lessons and to the social life of the school. Not "talking about moral qualities" but providing that "the spirit of morality shall dominate the entire life of the school" is the aim.

This end is to be carried out chiefly through:

(1) *Student councils*, committees, scout groups, honor groups, badges, etc.



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(2) *Appeal*, through story, personal experience, and current happenings met in the day's work.

(3) *Discussion* of stories and cases.

Bibliographies on the "law of health," the "law of kindness," etc. are furnished. These consist largely of biographies, stories of heroism, books on ethics, Bible extracts, poems, and hymns. A detailed year's plan for Grade VI has been printed (School Document No. 10, 1924) by the City of Boston. Similar plans for the other grades are in preparation.

Perhaps the boldest venture in the Boston experiment is the expectation that grade teachers untrained in teaching ethics shall put this plan in execution at once. The success of this attempt has been forwarded by the institution of a monthly magazine edited by a committee of teachers themselves, and published by the Boston School Committee. The first number appeared in September, 1925, and from this magazine as well as from a member of the editorial board, a school principal and an old friend of mine, I have been given some insight as to the actual working out of the plan since September, 1925.

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The teachers of each grade have been asked to write out a description of the most successful day's experiment in the teaching of ethics. From these descriptions the best are selected and handed in for publication in the monthly magazine which goes to all the teachers. The October number contains illustrations of how each of the eleven "moral laws" was actually carried out in some one of the eight grades. Thus we are shown in detail in this number of the magazine how

The Law of Health was worked out in the Kindergarten.

The Law of Kindness was worked out in Grade I.

The Law of Reliability (veracity) was worked out in Grade II.

The Law of Team Work was worked out in Grade III.

The Law of Self-Control was worked out in Special Class.

The Law of Duty was worked out in Grade IV.

The Law of Good Workmanship was worked out in Grade V.

The Law of Self-Reliance was worked out in Grade VI.

The Law of Sportsmanship (Team work) was worked out in Grade VII.

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The Law of Loyalty was worked out in Grade VIII.  
The Law of Obedience was worked out in Grade IX.

This selection is merely for illustration. Of course all the laws are to be applied in every grade. Names of contributors are not published.

Looking through the magazine: "Citizenship through Character" from October 1925 to April 1926 we find: (1) The words and music of songs written by pupils to illustrate Self-Control and various other "laws." (2) A group of brief dramas written by one of the children is worked out in coöperative authorship by a class. Each takes but a few minutes to act and each illustrates some "moral law." In one room "two or three duties were presented each morning" within the fifteen-minute period. Drama is also improvised under the teacher's guidance: "To enliven these discussions [of politeness and courtesy] I resorted to the children's love of dramatizing. I selected groups of children (Grade II) to portray everyday situations which require courtesy. The children suggested a common accident which occurs when a child, while running, collides with an elderly person carrying packages. The child picked up the package which had fallen to the ground, handed it to the elderly person, saying: 'I am sorry.' Several

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children brought toy telephones to school, which we utilized for 'telephone talks.' They 'called up' the man at the store, their aunt, their play-mates, the doctor, and many more. We gave especial attention to politeness and courtesy in all this."\* (3) We find a group of original poems on the various "laws." (4) One teacher coöperated most admirably with the traffic policeman, an ethical authority known to all the school children outside school. "When a child has been disobedient to the traffic officer's commands, I have invited the officer to call, introduced him to the children as one of their friends, and we have all had a little friendly chat which has certainly borne good fruit."

(5) We find (in the October number) a group of one-minute speeches on self-reliance written in the regular English class and delivered in the fifteen-minute period at the beginning of school. The speakers were called "minute men." (6) We find brief narratives written by children out of their own experience. For example, to illustrate "team work" we read:

My uncle has a store on Lowell St. One girl in the store takes the money. Another girl fits the

\* *Citizenship through Character*, January, 1928, p. 13.

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coats on the customers. Another changes the coats if they do not fit. My uncle directs them and all work together their best for him and his business. One for all and all for one makes team work.

When I was walking through Cambridge St. I saw some men digging. They were all helping to make the street wider. There was a foreman to help them. He must know a lot about widening streets.

(7) *Pictures*, cut from Sunday papers, drawn from the Public Library set of Dutch pictures, and from other sources including the children's own hands. There are also lists of slogans, acrostics, pageants, "memory gems," and topics for discussion.

That parents appreciate the teachers' efforts is shown by such letters as these:\*

I think the work you are doing is a great help to my children. It teaches them good habits and how to control themselves. It makes them self-reliant and able to think for themselves.

I think my daughter is becoming much more reliable at home doing little tasks and helping with the baby without being told, which helps me with my work and makes everything much more pleasant.

\* Citizenship through Character, March, 1926, p. 31.

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To me one of the most interesting points in this Boston Plan for Ethical Teaching is that it is worked out (a) in a city wherein the Roman Catholic citizens largely outnumber the Protestants and the Hebrews and (b) under a Roman Catholic superintendent of schools. It has often been said that the Catholic Church is opposed to any teaching of ethics divorced from the teaching of Catholic Christianity. The adoption of the Boston plan appears to prove the contrary. Religion is here associated with the ethical teaching through the singing of hymns such as *America*, *The Lord Is My Shepherd*, *O Worship the King*, *Jerusalem the Golden*, and *Abide with Me*. (Secular songs such as *Men of Harlech*, *Home Sweet Home*, and *Old Folks at Home* are also recommended.) Clearly this is not the religion of any single division of Christianity.

Bible reading is also permitted in the five-minute period 9 to 9.05 immediately preceding the fifteen minutes set apart for ethics. This too is of course a non-sectarian exercise and, with the hymns, tends to show that we have not pushed religion altogether out of the Boston schools today but have agreed in practice that

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religion is greater than any of its sects or divisions.

To me this plan of ethical teaching in the Boston public schools is an interesting adventure on the borderland of ethics and education. Though the plan has only been in operation since September 1925, I know from personal experience that some at least of the teachers are entering into it with great zest and intelligence, and from what I have seen of public school teachers in general I believe that the great majority of them will welcome it as an elaboration and extension of something that they have always been doing, although it has not always been called "citizenship through character development." Under the attrition of use, this cumbersome phrase is sure to be abbreviated, and the simple word "ethics" is likely to remain. For although there is an advantage in using at the outset a harmless and neutral word like "citizenship," the attempt to stretch this word to cover duties within the family, the church, and the school is likely to break down. We are left then with ungrammatical monstrosities like Character Development or Character Education. These too I think we shall come to discard

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not so much because we care for good English as because we want to save time. "Ethics" sounds less "goody-goody" and less threatening than "morals" or "virtues," and so I think it has a good chance to survive.

But will the Boston Plan itself survive? Will the experiment, now (May, 1926) scarcely seven months old, prove successful? I believe that it will. With the modifications, extensions, and retractions that use is sure to bring to this young sprout, I believe that the new energy of 1914, which brought into existence the Hutchins Code (1917), the Iowa Plan (1922), and was distributed in 1925 into the activities of Boston teachers and Boston school children, will continue in circulation, and that within a few years we shall be amazed to think that prior to 1925 there was a period when we foolishly tried to educate youth without teaching ethics in the public schools.

I take it that most of us are led or driven to work out our ethics through experiences which rouse us to reflect, to systematize, and clarify our ideas about what is right and what is wrong in concrete life situations. So in my work with



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Harvard students I am applying on the campus some of these same principles which draw out children. I try in class to recall to the boys experiences lying latent in their minds, or to make vivid such experiences of my own as have taught me something. What the students learn is not my ideas about their experiences or about my experiences, but their own ideas, their best interpretations of what we rake up together in class out of their memories or out of mine. Of course the students also hear what I think about these matters; but I doubt if they remember much of it. What sticks is the result of their own reflections—not very prolonged or profound, but enough to make some impression.

Now and then after I have been discussing problems of veracity with a class, some member of it comes to see me about a difficulty of his own. Shall he tell the truth in this particularly complicated and embarrassing situation in which he finds himself? Shall he join this very exclusive club, membership in which involves the apparent acceptance of standards which he does not believe in? Has he (under conditions named) the right to break off his engagement in marriage? This sort of discussion in which,

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like most doctors, I have had some experience, sometimes leads on to lasting friendships in which I learn much needed lessons about student psychology and about my job as a teacher.

But, one may ask: Is the study of ethics rejected by all except one specially "moral" type of college student?

No. I think it is a fairly representative group of men who elect social ethics at Harvard, a fair sample of the extraordinarily heterogeneous group of men who now come to college. Various racial stocks, various home backgrounds, men who intend to study and men who come to Harvard for a "country club" existence, all sorts elect social ethics, usually at a friend's suggestion. Some of them like ethics when they finally find out what it is. Some are bored. Those who like it are generally pleased because they find that it belongs to that group of college studies which aim chiefly to make men think rather than to store their memories with important facts. Many students don't like what they call "memory courses." Some of these men don't want to be made to think either, though they have no objection to *talking*, or to writing down, casually and thoughtlessly, what they find on the surface

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of their minds. But there remains a fraction who really like to use their minds and are interested in courses which encourage this.

One of the surprises of teaching at Harvard is this: a good many students consult me (gratis) about their health. Such visits usually bring up some talk about the boy's home affairs, his doings in vacations, his friends, and his interests outside college studies. I get to know him a little. Then a perfectly unexpected result is apt to occur. He begins to do better work in the classroom. Why? Our acquaintance outside class usually does not touch on his studies in any way. I never urge him to study or try to improve his habits of work. Why then do I see in most cases a striking gain in his class work after a few talks about his health? I do not know. But I have seen it happen often enough to be sure that it is not coincidence.

## V: *Ethics and Social Work*

APPLIED ethics, the attempt to make ourselves and the world better, to get people out of trouble, is perhaps more the job of the social worker than of anyone else. In other occupations people try to get their fellow beings out of troubles of a particular sort. Thus, lawyers are supposed to champion the victims of injustice, doctors the victims of ill health, clergymen the victims of spiritual poverty, teachers those oppressed by ignorance, architects those in need of houses, farmers, butchers and grocers those lacking food. But to the social worker troubles of all sorts are brought, and if she cannot directly give aid or advice, she is supposed to "steer" the needy to the doors of those who can.

This definite ethical bias is sometimes made still more central in the conception of social work. Thus in 1907 I printed in "*Charities and the Commons*"\* a paper to answer the question,—"What is social work?" and maintained that

\* *Charities and the Commons*, Nov. 2, 1907.

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it was the attempt to understand and to mould faulty character. To this end (I thought) all our efforts at economic or hygienic rehabilitation are ultimately directed. This may seem a strange definition. But in fact I was only trying to formulate what I saw and heard of the social work done by leaders in the social work of that day,—by Josephine Shaw Lowell, Charles, James and Elizabeth Putnam, by Mrs. Glendower Evans, by Mrs. Joseph Lee, Charles W. Birtwell, Zilpha D. Smith and Frank P. Sanborn. To the people of this group, character was always and everywhere the central fact. "Not alms but a friend" became the motto of the Boston Associated Charities, because friendship was, they thought, the greatest lever in the world for raising human beings to higher moral and *thus* to better economic and hygienic standards. I believe that this idea about the business of social work reflected the personal ideals of the people named and of others like-minded. Conduct, right doing, unselfishness was more constantly in their minds, more dominant in their actions than in those of any other group of people that I have ever known. Duty was their

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ruling passion. The other sides of life—art, philosophy, athletics, scholarship, statecraft, worship—they greatly admired but from a distance. Joseph Lee had not yet popularized the cult of play. Socialistic solutions of human ills made then no appeal. Popularized versions of biology had not yet cast their blight upon the thinking of socially-minded people. Hence what Emerson called “the Sovereignty of Ethics,”—its right to command and subordinate all other human interests, was unquestioned in the minds and in the lives of the people who started social work in America. To them, and to me their admirer, an interest in practical ethics and an interest in social work were almost identical. They were two ways of phrasing the most vivid interest that the world disclosed.

## II

But this point of view was soon challenged. “Who are we,” Miss Alice Higgins at once asked, “that we should think ourselves fit to mould faulty character? And even supposing we could do this, would it cure all the evils against which social workers fight? Would it

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solve the problem of unemployment, of lonely old age, of orphanhood, of industrial accidents?" Preventive work and all the reforms sought through legislation seem to be ruled out of the social worker's job if we phrase it as the attempt to understand and to mould faulty character.

From another standpoint Edward T. Devine\* at once attacked my ethical emphasis. Bad conditions, bad environment, bad education are what we should attack, he said. Since bad environment has produced the social ills which we see around us, a better environment will diminish or abolish them. If the schools, the courts, the housing conditions, child labor, hygiene, etc., are properly attended to "*character will take care of itself.*" Here we see emerging that acceptance of Marxian and of biological dogma which has characterized the "new" brand of social work and until recently bid fair to dominate the ethical motive. "Right" and "wrong" are from this point of view rather old-fashioned terms, loved by the censorious but rarely by the scientific or the socially-minded. What we used to call "bad" we now call "anti-social" or unconventional. Children are no longer "naughty."

\*Loc. cit., 1907. Vol IX, No. 5, p. 947.

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They follow their instincts because they cannot do otherwise. Girls do not "go wrong." They are mal-adjusted to their environment.

Of this one might say (as has been said of Unitarianism) that it is the easiest of all creeds to get but the hardest to keep. It is easy to hold on paper and at a distance from the concrete problems of social work. But I have never known a successful case worker whose actions and experiences did not contradict it. Nevertheless, it sounds so well that it will probably be widely accepted for a good while longer. For it is supposed to be "modern," "scientific" and "radical," epithets whose prestige we are glad in our time to accept without inquiring what they mean.

### III

#### *A Contemporary Social Workers' Muddle and Its Causes*

But as I want this article to be narrative rather than controversial, I shall pursue this subject no further just now. My present interest is to point to a particular *muddle* the attempt to



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clear up which is just now a stimulating adventure on the borderlands between ethics and social work. This muddle results from the fact that most social workers adopt simultaneously both the ethical and the non-ethical point of view, or dabble in them alternately. A favorite way of mixing ethics and fatalism is to do our *work* as if our clients were to some extent responsible for what they do and then in our *reports* and our speeches to brandish the fashionable dogma of psychological determinism and talk as if we were all irresponsible machines. This sort of confusion is almost inevitable, I suppose, as long as the time and energy devoted by social workers to reading, writing and study is as small as it is among most of whom I know. Despite their sincere aspirations to make social work a profession, very few workers find time for reading on the subject of their own work. Often they are too tired when evening comes. But I think few of them now realize the ethical anomaly of maintaining that social work is and ought to be a profession and yet doing as little as they now do to keep up with the best thought of their subject, as members of a profession must. I suppose it would be generally

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agreed that it is characteristic of a *trade* to do the day's work without independent study of its purpose, its assumptions and its principles, without trying to keep abreast of what others are thinking about it and without trying to make any contribution to its advance. We do not expect the plumber to read books and journals on sanitary engineering, to write articles on the prevention of leaks. But the *professional* man, doctor, lawyer, engineer, is expected to read. I am aware that many doctors read but little and I suspect that the same is true in other professions. But doctors know that medicine is maintained as a profession by those who do read, write and investigate, and that they ought to take their part in this. They do not like to confess their shortcomings. Like the social workers, they are tired in the evening and driven hard by the pressure and hurry of case-work. But others just as busy manage to arrange their time and their work so as to allow for the necessary study.

This duty of so arranging time and work as to get in the study which one knows is essential to a professional standard has not yet, I think, presented itself in ethical terms to many social

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workers. I once addressed a body of social workers on the subject of Dr. William Healy's splendid book, "The Individual Delinquent",—a monumental piece of research based not only on scholarship but on case-studies, many of which are given in full. I showed the book to my hearers and read tempting extracts. I did not disguise my enthusiasm for it and I flatter myself that I excited some real interest. But when at the end I said, "Now I will give a copy of this book to everyone of you who will promise to read it", not one accepted the offer. Perhaps this was because they felt embarrassed about putting me to so much expense, or because they were unwilling to accept "charity", and were determined to get and read this masterpiece later on. But I am inclined to believe that the dimensions of the book and the number of its pages were the main cause of their silence. For some years later I questioned a good many of those present at this meeting and found that they still were ignorant of this classic which no social worker has, as I think, any right to leave unread. How can one urge clients to use their reason, to consider before they act,—in short, to be thoughtful—when one does so little real

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thinking that one is willing to leave unread the thoughts of the best students of one's own subject?

One answer might be that there are very few books about social work that are worth reading. Twenty years ago that might have been plausibly maintained. But since that time the number of valuable books published has been large and the magazine literature has greatly increased and improved. I venture to say that only people who have not read them will deny the value of the books on social work published since 1900.

Nor have the important books been so numerous as to discourage any attempt to keep up. In medicine it is really discouraging to face in a library the number of valuable books, American, English, German, French, Italian, Scandinavian, appearing each year. Compared to the doctor's, I think the social worker's task in keeping up to date is easy. Yet compared to the doctors the social workers of my acquaintance read scarcely anything and write still less. So long as this is true, no profession can claim that title.

I realize that social workers have a pretty

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hard time of it between the claims of those who encourage them (as I do) to take their work in a professional spirit, and the denunciations of those who like Scott Nearing urge them to go out of business altogether, because they are supporting a rotten social system. But I maintain that it is only by more reading, writing and thinking that they can see the fallacies in Scott Nearing's arguments and so pursue their very important and valuable work undisturbed. For to escape spiritual worry about the worth whileness of our aims is to increase both our working energy and our satisfaction in work.

One reason, I fancy, why social work is such a wearing occupation is that our foundations are so often rocked and undermined,—not in fact but in our unguarded and faltering minds. It is like being in a war trench without dug-outs. Study and research are like the dug-out into which one can retire from the firing line of case work when our need for spiritual recuperation grows instant. When mountains of failure pile up in front of us, one certain success is always in reach. We can always succeed in the effort to enlighten our ignorance by study. There victory and advance are sure. There at any rate

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one can make a plan and see it carried out so that two blades of grass shall grow where our ignorance sprouted but one. Then as we read we may see how to redirect our efforts and to plan a campaign more rationally. There we find reinforcement in the more vivid awareness of others who face problems very like ours and touch shoulders with us in the line.

I grant that the social worker is hard pressed to find study-time and still more, study-energy. But I contend that time and energy are husbanded by the fresh orientation, the greater clearness of aim, the spiritual refreshment which study gives. As a college teacher I am naturally in the way of urging these claims upon the attention of social workers—not primarily as a matter of ethics but as a means of enfranchisement from the dominion of hurry and the deadening effect of routine.

### *Chronic Hurry: A Crime*

This brings me to another problem which I have very frequently discussed with social workers, a puzzle which is certainly on the borderland between ethics and social work, and the

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solution of which calls for an attack in the spirit of adventure: the problem of hurry. Most social workers—like most doctors and indeed like most of the professional people in America—are tempted to live and die in a hurry, to work, play, make love and worship in a hurry, to eat, drink and sleep in a hurry. Whatever our climate, our inheritance, our interests and institutions may have to do with this tendency, we all believe in being busy and have come to believe that to be busy is to be in a hurry. Admittedly professional work is never finished. There is always more left to do at the end of a working day, no matter how long. We stop, not because we have finished but because it is time to stop.

But if we admit this,—as I certainly do,—we seem to be entrapped in a system that *demand*s hurry. How else can we respond to the demands of an unfinished task? If we cannot do it all, we must at least do all we can, stretch every nerve and press with vigor on. All but the acknowledged sluggard will do his best to keep up with his work and if this is so, is it not simply the part of common decency to work at top speed, that is,—in a hurry? Especially if

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our job concerns the lives of people in trouble, the social emergencies of the poor, the sick, of those physically or morally in danger, hurry seems—as I have said—to be nothing but the decent response of one whose eyes are open to see the facts before him. Fire engines hurry to the fire. How could they do otherwise? But the conflagrations which the social workers aim to check before they become unmanageable are no less serious than a house afire and though they seem to burn more slowly than a house, they are more numerous than fires. No fireman has a dozen fires to attend to at once. No social worker has so few.

All this seems obvious,—indeed commonplace. But almost everyone will also admit the obviousness of my next statement: first rate work is almost never done in a hurry. For hurry can hardly admit of the focussed concentration, the careful aim, the well-ripened thought, the steady watchfulness, the delicate sensitiveness to many sorts of impressions which good work calls for. Does not good case work (or good supervisory work) call for the unhurried exercise of these powers? Are not most of our blunders and



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shortcomings explicable by a moment of carelessness or of forgetfulness, itself the product of hurry?

We seem, then, to be led to this conclusion. Much, perhaps most social work, is done in a hurry. But good work can rarely be done in a hurry. Therefore much, perhaps most, social work is not well done. If one rebels against this, one may be asked to recall how familiar is the plea, "Oh, yes, we would like to do that, but we have no time; the press of cases is too great. Why as it is, we never get away from the office until——o'clock and often have to work in the evenings or on Sundays." That proves the habit of hurry and implies that the quality of work (sometimes? often? usually?), is that which goes with hurry.

Of course one rightly hurries if one is late for a train, or when one has one hundred cards to address in 30 minutes. There are plenty of proper times for hurry. But these times cannot constitute a major portion of any work of professional grade. For what is done in a hurry is either mechanical (train catching, card addressing) or risks serious blunders of omission, commission, distortion.

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### *The Cure: Limitation of Intake*

All this I have discussed many times with doctors prone to hurry through their hospital work, with social workers chronically overburdened with case-work and with clergymen, some of whom take a sort of pride in being "overwhelmed" by the multitude of their duties. There is no way out of the difficulty except the *limitation of intake*, the refusal to deal with more than so many patients, students, clients, parishioners, applicants of any kind within a day.

That this is the only way sensibly to meet the adventure of professional work seems clear,—for these reasons. Professional work, as we all know, can never be finished. Its ramifications extend to infinity, like time and space. But though we all know this we rarely face its consequences. Since our work has no end there is obviously no sense in biting off more of it than we can chew well. We must inevitably leave undone much that we want to do, much that needs to be done,—yes, cries to be done, cries out through the sorrows, dangers, hungers of human beings applying at our office. If we do

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not happen to hear these cries and to be genuinely moved by them, it is merely a matter of the chance situation of our desk or our room. The plangent stream of humanity's needs flows by everyman's door unless he puts his house where men are scarce or reticent. But in the long run, it is no man's duty to do (habitually) more than he can do well, no matter what lack or need he then seems to leave unmet. In emergencies, yes, of course, one may be called on to hurry, to bungle, even to mangle a job in order to get it done somehow, anyhow. But no one knows better than the social worker that life does not consist of emergencies. Her clients are daily claiming that it does. She is daily denying it. Emergencies, as she well knows, are rare.

Everyone, then, who attempts work of a professional grade is leaving untouched endless vistas of work that he might accomplish were he not a finite being. The toughest and quickest people leave just as great a margin untouched, stop just as far short of what they might do as the people of average strength and speed. A man who could work twenty-four hours a day (and keep his eyes open for his opportunities) would be no nearer catching up with the calls

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upon his time than the man who worked eight hours a day. For 100 is no nearer to infinity than 10 is.

Properly considered, this is a counsel of hope and not of despair. The work of the world is infinite and we are finite. But no man or woman is intended to do or attempt the work of the world—*only to do his fair slice of it in such a way as to stimulate others to do their slices*. If he does all that he possibly can get through in a hurried and mediocre way, he thereby encourages others to do their (larger or smaller) bits in an equally mediocre way. He helps to create and spread a standard of work poorly done, to perpetuate the old blunders and thicken the crust of habit upon our half-blinded eyes.

But when anyone forswears hurry and does each important job with all the light and conscience that he possesses, no matter how little he accomplishes or how small the number of "cases" opened, closed or continued, he spurs others to similar standards and so through what he inspires others to do, *multiplies his own accomplishment* as he never could do by increasing his quantity output. For the radiations of influence and suggestion passing outward in all

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directions from a piece of work done with all one's heart and mind, can affect dozens of others' work and through them others' and others' without known limit. Thus one may begin to mobilize an infinite energy against an infinite job. One does not always work so, but it is the only hopeful way to work.

This way—like every other path that is worth while, requires faith. It is an adventure and not a comfortable seat by the fire. One never sees exactly "*what* argument his life to his neighbor's creed hath lent." No one visualizes infinity though everyone of us is dealing with it every day. Just *how* one is to help the whole world by doing well an obscure job in an obscure laboratory or parish or office, one sees as little as the worker in pure science sees the useful applications of his discoveries. Nevertheless, he must risk his life on the faith that inasmuch as he does his best unto the least of these jobs, he is somehow touching and moving the whole world. No one wants anything less and so action based on that faith is really risking one's life. One cannot see the future and without that vision no one can *know* how one's

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efforts reach their goal. What evidence, then, that this faith is not superstitious?

The answer is that though in one's *own* life one can't ask to have the future disclosed nor to see how faithfulness is infinitely effective, there are plenty of examples in literature and history to show how in others' lives faithfulness to this doctrine has moved the world. Pasteur, working in a dingy, stifling attic to find why vinegar sometimes goes wrong in the making,—his mind for the time being wholly subdued to the sour stuff it worked in, ranging no further than that sordid task, Pasteur "happens" upon the fact that bacteria are of crucial importance to the life and fortunes of all mankind. So he cures rabies, prevents anthrax, stimulates Lister to the discovery of aseptic surgery and starts a steady wave of discoveries, each leading to the next, a wave that is still passing through our own time and on to future generations without visible end.

Pasteur had steady faith in the far-reaching radiations of the adventure of research. In that faith he was content to concentrate his daily energies on tasks that to any but the eye of faith looked hopelessly small, meaningless and dull.

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Good case work is always research in Pasteur's sense. One case well studied, followed through to our utmost, devotedly traced into its obscurities and out on the other side, may bring to light facts and clues that will help many more people in the end than one worker could ever deal with in a lifetime. But one case hurriedly put through may help no one and certainly hurts the worker's habits of work which then are applied to hurt her work on other cases and by example to weaken other people's work in an infinitely extending vista of mischief.

For these reasons I have been trying for a good many years to persuade myself and the social workers of my acquaintance (1) that chronic hurry is a crime, not a misfortune, and (2) therefore that it is cruel and hard hearted *not* to limit intake in order that we may do good work. I suppose I have tried *hurriedly* to persuade them not to hurry and therefore deserve to fail, as I certainly have. I have not taken enough of my own medicine nor had sufficient faith in my own gospel of adventure, which of course is my own only in the sense that I have begun to learn it from the lips and the lives of those who have truly lived it.

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### *Problems of Veracity in Social Work*

The only other ethical adventure that seems worth mentioning in this sketch of my relations with social workers concerns the problem of veracity. Having come to believe that entire truthfulness is central in social ethics and having been much impressed with the good results of telling the truth in medical work, I was naturally sensitized to perceive similar problems in social work when (in 1920) I began to teach ethics and to meet social workers in my classes. As I have already printed some of my experiences on this subject\* I will here only mention two supplementary points.

Social workers, like most of the other groups (doctors, clergymen, business men) with whom I have discussed the ethics of veracity, agree that we should not lie nor steal. Our differences of opinion first crop out when one begins to ask what concrete actions are or are not included under lying or stealing. For example, no social worker believes in the practice of picking pockets. That is certainly stealing. But can one "pick another's mind" without any of the

\* See Survey, April 15, 1924—Should Social Workers Lie?



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blame attached to picking his pocket? By "picking a person's mind"\*\*\* I mean getting out of him information that he does not wish or intend to divulge and perhaps is not aware that he has divulged. Such information, like the contents of his pockets, may be of definite value to him. ("I wouldn't for a hundred dollars have that generally known.") Further, he may have a perfect right to keep it to himself—unlike the witness in court during cross examination. Have we, then, a right to "worm it out of him" in case we think we can use it for his or for others' benefit? Certainly we have if he has given blanket permission for such a process of extraction,—as the patient does who puts himself in the hands of a psycho-analyst. But ordinarily the social worker's relationship to her client involves neither explicitly nor tacitly any such *carte blanche* permission to search his mind. Hence I contend that stealing is the right word to use for the act which covertly deprives him of the exclusive control of facts which he wishes to keep to himself.

Of course if we have done this unintention-

\*\*\* Not my own phrase, but one suggested by my friend, Mrs. Edith M. Baylor of the Boston Children's Aid Society.

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ally, if we have accidentally pressed a spring so as to release information which he did not intend to share, we cannot properly be said to have stolen. But I am thinking of the more deliberate investigations—financial, psychological or historical—which social workers sometimes undertake with clients who when they seek help have no idea how much they are being let in for, and perhaps would have made shift to get along without any such help had they known what it involved.

“Obtaining information under false pretences” is another way of phrasing the technical procedure which I am describing. Obviously there is no malice, no selfish motive, no thought of personal gain here, as there is when one obtains money under false pretences. Unlike pockets, minds are picked by philanthropists and supposedly, perhaps actually, for the benefit of the client. This fact is to many a sufficient defense against any suspicion of bad ethics. Is it sufficient?

To me it seems insufficient. Any act—or almost any—may be done from good motives. The ethical question in the case of “picking another’s mind” is as I see it either:—

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(1) Are we violating the confidence which the client supposes he has a right to put in us, or

(2) Are we tricking him (by skill or suddenness) into giving us what he does not wish to give and is neither legally nor morally bound to give? If we can picture the client as saying after we are gone, "I think it was mean of her to worm that out of me. I didn't suppose she was that sort or I'd never have talked to her at all,"—then, I think, we have stolen, morally if not legally.

In talking this over with social workers I find that my most effective argument is the question: How are you going to get on with that client after he discovers (as he probably will) that you have "picked his mind"? Isn't he likely to shut up like a clam or to resent what you have done so that you can't get onto a friendly basis with him? Can you accomplish anything worth while if he doesn't trust you? Even if he forgives you must you not restore his confidence by promising not to trick him again?

Of course I am here leaving criminals and suspected criminals out of account. I do not care to argue now the question whether by detective work or by cross questioning the police have

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a moral as well as a legal right to deceive a criminal in order to entrap him. For whatever may be the rights and duties of the state and of the police towards offenders and suspected offenders, such work is inconsistent with the main business of social workers, although some societies for the prevention of cruelty to children have at times allowed their agents to stray outside the field of social work and to undertake police functions. Of course social workers cannot be both the friends and the prosecutors of their clients.

### *Confidential Reports About Social Workers*

One other question of veracity, which I have often discussed with social workers, is the familiar scandal of "confidential" opinions about other social workers (in part unfavorable or they would not be confidential) solicited from those who have employed them by other agencies, such as the American Association of Social Workers. In my opinion, the unfavorable comments thus obtained ought to have been given first to the person described. If this had been done, there would be no reason for keep-

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ing anything "confidential," *i.e.*, concealing the gist of its written expression from the person it describes. If, on the other hand, the unfavorable portion of the opinion has *not* previously been given by the person expressing it to the person it most concerns, then she has not been given a proper opportunity of overcoming her faults but has been dealt with disingenuously by those whom she counts on for frankness. Either she is considered too hopeless even to warn or the task of criticism is shirked because it is disagreeable. Both these courses seem to me unfair if we are trying to do our best for all who are in close relations to us, an ideal to which all social workers must be assumed to owe allegiance.

When I have remonstrated with those who ask for "confidential reports" in this familiar way, the answer which I get is usually:—"Well, if we don't promise to keep unfavorable comments confidential, we get none at all. Only favorable reports are sent." If this is true, it seems to me to prove a deplorable, an unfriendly, lack of frankness between social case workers and their supervisors.

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### *Why Does Social Work Imply Honest Dealings?*

Earlier in this paper I mentioned my first definition of social work as *the attempt to understand and to mould faulty character*. I mentioned also some of the criticisms levelled at it—namely, that it was priggish and that it covered at best only part of the field. I will now propose another definition which aims to meet these criticisms and suggests why veracity seems to me so centrally important in social technique.

An adequate definition of social work should be based on a conception of (a) the nature of the troubles which it aims to prevent or to cure (diagnosis) and (b) the means of doing this (treatment). Suppose we say that poverty, ill health, delinquency, loneliness, unemployment and the other ills attacked by the social worker express in different ways the *isolation* of a person (or a group) from the sources of strength by which a satisfactory life is fed. The sick person is out of touch with the sources of energy, *i.e.*, food, sleep, fresh air, sunlight, iodine, insulin, biologic immunizing substances, which keep the rest of us well. Cure means transfusing such

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energies into him. The unemployed (not the unemployable) person is one who has drifted out of the economic currents which carry the rest of the world along. The delinquent has somehow been isolated from the action of motives which keep most people straight. I mean such motives as a dominant desire for the respect of parents, teachers, employers, and non-delinquent friends or the desire to make good on an honest job. If we succeed in helping a delinquent it is because through friendship, through the influence of a foster family, through new interests or new environment, we have transfused into his veins some of the currents of motive that flow through us ordinary people and keep us as decent as we are. Sometimes these currents are blocked inside rather than outside the personality. He is a stranger to himself, is imprisoned within himself, is starving himself, is at war with himself. Then the unblocking of the energies which his life needs for its support must be attempted within him as well as outside him.

For sick, idle, faulty persons, it is a *channeling or unblocking process* that is needed. Moreover, so far as the social worker's job is con-

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cerned we can go one step further and say: the channels which we must try to unblock and to keep clear are always *channels of understanding*. The victim of conflicts does not understand himself, the delinquent does not understand what friendship, what a foster family, what self-respecting work may mean to him as they do to others, the man out of work does not understand where help is to be found in securing work, the sick (if the social worker can help him) is one who does not understand how to keep himself well or where to go for adequate medical aid or what motives there are for courage and persistence in his fight for health.

What the social worker endeavors to transfuse through these unblocked channels of understanding is primarily some form of truth, ranging from simple information up through education to an awareness of capacities, interests, affections, which he scarcely dreams of as yet but which can bring him what he most desires. Finally, since truth is both beneficent and infinite, it seems natural to complete our definition of social work as follows:—

Social work is the effort to unblock and to keep clear the channels of understanding within



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a person, between a person and his group, or between groups (such as employers, employees and the public) and through these channels to favor the transfusion of the spirit and the power of God.

The first half of this definition is diagnostic—finding out what is wrong—and the second half aims to cure. But the cure is never any finite and fallible gift like money, surgery, advice or personal influence, but always the truth, the truer relation to the universe which these helps may invite or suggest but which the sufferer must himself reconstruct out of materials furnished him, as his tissues make over the crude foods which he eats.

One consequence of the definition which I wish to dwell on a little longer is its fatal and invariable demand for truth. For if the unblocking of the channels of understanding is always the social worker's chief job, then she has clearly no use for deceiving anyone. In war and in the detective business, lies are inevitable and will be abolished only when those occupations are abolished. But the would-be curer of misunderstanding, the would-be servant of the enfranchis-

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ing truth is bound by that attempt to give up certain kinds of confidentiality and of investigation.

Another consequence of the definition given above is that it frees the social worker from the reproach of priggishness. One who gives another the knowledge which he seeks is putting himself in no offensive or censorious position. He is passing on, like any honest middleman, the goods he has himself received. He knows and he intends everyone else to know that he is not the source of the help he transmits. Whether he gives hygienic advice, industrial guidance, psychologic reëducation, or whether he attempts legislative or administrative reform, he is still appealing to strength not his own, strength whose beneficence has no limit except our capacity and willingness to receive it.

*The End*



























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